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This document contains a small portion of the many articles published by René Guénon in the journal *Études Traditionnelles,* previously *Le Voile D'Isis*.

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PRAYER AND INCANTATION

Although in everyday language the word “prayer” is most often heard in a very vague sense, and is even taken as a synonym for the term “oration” in its generality, we believe it is appropriate to retain or restore to it the much more specific and restricted meaning it derives from its very etymology, for “prayer” properly and exclusively means “request” and cannot, without misuse, be employed to designate anything else[1]. From this perspective, a very clear distinction must be established between prayer and what we will call “incantation,” using this term for lack of a more precise one, which is lacking in Western languages, and reserving the right to define it precisely later.

First, to indicate how prayer can be understood, let us consider any community, whether religious or simply social: each member of this community is bound to it to a certain extent, determined by the scope of the community’s sphere of action, and, to that same extent, they must logically participate in return in certain benefits, entirely material in some cases (such as that of present-day nations, for example, or the many kinds of associations based on a pure and simple solidarity of interests), but which can also, in other cases, relate to extra-corporeal modalities of the individual, that is to say to what can be called in a general way the psychic domain (consolations or other favors of a sentimental order, and sometimes even of a higher order), or, while being material, be obtained by means that appear immaterial, let us say more precisely by the intervention of elements not belonging to the bodily order, but nevertheless acting directly on it (the obtaining of a cure by prayer is a particularly clear example of this last case). In all this, we are speaking only of the individual’s modalities, for these advantages can never extend beyond the individual domain, the only one that communities, whatever their nature, actually reach, provided

1 See F. Schuon’s article, De l’Oraison, in the March 1935 issue.

they are not initiatory organizations (these being, as we have explained previously in other articles, the only ones whose express purpose is to go beyond this domain), and which concern themselves with contingencies and special applications of practical interest from some point of view, and not merely, of course, in the crudest "utilitarian" sense.

We can therefore consider each community as possessing, in addition to purely material means of action in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say, pertaining solely to the physical order, a subtle force of order constituted in some way by the contributions of all its past and present members, and which, consequently, is all the more considerable and capable of producing more intense effects the older the community is and the greater its membership. It is also evident that this quantitative consideration essentially implies that it concerns the individual domain, beyond which it can no longer intervene in any way. Each member will be able, when needed, to use a portion of this force to their own advantage, and it will suffice for them to harmonize their individuality with the whole of the community to which they belong, a result they will obtain by conforming to the rules established by the community and appropriate to the various circumstances that may arise; thus, if the individual then formulates a request, it is, in short, at least in the most immediate way, to what one might call the spirit of the community (although the word "spirit" is somewhat inappropriate, since, fundamentally, it is only a psychic entity that is being discussed) that they will, consciously or unconsciously, address this request. However, it should be added that not everything is reducible to this in all cases: in the case of communities attached to an authentic and regular traditional form, which is notably the case of religious communities, and where the observance of the rules we have just discussed consists more specifically in the performance of certain rites, there is also the intervention of a truly "non-human" element, that is to say, what we have properly called a "spiritual influence,"* but which must also be regarded here as descending into the individual sphere, and as exerting its action there by means of the collective force in which it finds its support[2].

2 One can note that, according to Christian doctrine, the role of "spiritual influence" corresponds to the

Sometimes, the force we have just discussed, or, more precisely, the synthesis of "spiritual influence" with the collective force into which it is, so to speak, "incorporated," can concentrate on a physical "support," such as a specific place or object, which acts as a veritable "condenser," and produce perceptible manifestations there, like those reported in the Hebrew Bible concerning the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple of Solomon; one could also cite here, to varying degrees, pilgrimage sites, tombs, and relics of saints or other figures venerated by adherents of such and such a traditional form. This is the principal cause of the "miracles" that occur in the various religions, for these are facts whose existence is undeniable; it goes without saying, moreover, that, despite the common perception, these facts should not be considered contrary to natural laws, any more than, from another point of view, the "supra-rational" should be mistaken for the "irrational." In reality, "spiritual influences" also have their laws, which, although of a different order than those of natural forces (both psychic and corporeal), are not without certain analogies with them; thus, it is possible to determine circumstances particularly favorable to their action, which those who are their dispensers by virtue of the functions invested in them within a traditional organization can thereby bring about and direct, if they possess the necessary knowledge. It is important to note that the "miracles" in question here are, in themselves and independently of their cause, which alone possesses a "transcendent" character, purely physical phenomena, perceptible by one or more of the five external senses. Such phenomena are, moreover, the only ones that can be observed generally and indiscriminately by the entire mass of the people or "believers," whose effective understanding does not extend beyond the limits of the bodily modality of individuality.

The benefits that can be obtained through prayer and the practice of the rites of a social or religious community (rites common to all its members without exception, therefore purely exoteric and having no initiatory character, and insofar as they are not considered to serve as a basis for spiritual "realization") are essentially relative and contingent,

action of "grace" and that of the collective force of the "communion of saints".

but are nevertheless by no means negligible for the individual, who is himself relative and contingent. He would therefore be wrong to deprive himself of them voluntarily, if he is attached to some organization capable of providing them to him. Thus, since it is necessary to take into account the nature of the human being as it is, in the order of reality to which it belongs, it is by no means blameworthy, even for someone who is something other than a simple "believer" (making here a distinction between "belief" and "knowledge" which corresponds in short to that of exotericism and esotericism), to conform, for an interested purpose, by the very fact that it is individual, and outside of any properly doctrinal consideration, to the external prescriptions of a religion or traditional legislation, provided that he attributes to what he expects from it only its proper importance and the place that legitimately belongs to it, and provided also that the community does not put conditions on it which, although commonly admissible, would constitute a real impossibility in fact in this particular case; Subject to these reservations alone, prayer, whether addressed to a collective entity or, through it, to the "spiritual influence" that acts through it, is perfectly legitimate, even according to the most rigorous orthodoxy in the realm of pure doctrine.

These considerations will make it easier to understand, through the comparison they allow us to draw, what we will now say about incantation; it is essential to note that what we call incantation has absolutely nothing in common with the magical practices sometimes given the same name; but moreover, we have explained ourselves sufficiently on the subject of magic on numerous occasions so that no confusion is possible and it is unnecessary to dwell on it further. The incantation we are discussing, unlike prayer, is not a request, and it does not even presuppose the existence of anything external (which every request necessarily presupposes), because externality can ultimately only be understood in relation to the individual, whom it is precisely a matter of transcending; it is an aspiration of the being towards the Universal, in order to obtain what we might call, in somewhat "theological" language, a spiritual grace, that is to say, essentially, an inner illumination which, naturally, may be more or less complete depending on the circumstances. Here, the action of

“spiritual influence” must be considered in its pure state, so to speak; the individual, instead of seeking to draw it down upon themselves as in prayer, tends instead to rise up towards it. This incantation, which is thus defined as an entirely internal operation in principle, can nevertheless, in many cases, be expressed and “supported” externally by words or gestures, constituting certain initiatory rites, such as the munira in the Hindu tradition or the dhikr in the Islamic tradition, and which must be considered as determining rhythmic vibrations that have a repercussion across a more or less extensive domain in the indefinite series of states of being. Whether the result actually obtained is more or less complete, as we said earlier, the ultimate goal to be achieved is always the realization within oneself of the “Universal Man,” through the perfect communion of all states, harmoniously and in accordance with the hierarchy, in full blossoming in both senses of “amplitude” and “exaltation,” that is to say, both in the horizontal expansion of the modalities of each state and in the vertical superposition of the different states, according to the geometric figuration that we have explained in detail in The Symbolism of the Cross.

This leads us to establish another distinction, considering the various degrees that can be attained according to the extent of the result obtained in striving toward this goal; And first of all, at the bottom and outside the hierarchy thus established, we must place the multitude of the “profane,” that is to say, all those who, like the simple believers of religions, can only obtain actual results in relation to their bodily individuality, and within the limits of this portion or special modality of individuality, since their consciousness goes neither further nor higher than the domain enclosed within these restricted limits. Yet, among these believers, there are a few, in small numbers, who acquire something more (and this is the case of certain mystics, who could be considered in this sense as more “intellectual” than others): without leaving their individuality, but in “extensions” of it, they indirectly perceive certain realities of a higher order, not as they are in themselves, but translated symbolically and clothed in psychic or mental forms. These are still phenomena (that is to say, in the etymological sense, appearances, always relative and illusory insofar as they are formal),

but suprasensible phenomena, which are not observable by everyone, and which can bring to those who perceive them certainties, always incomplete, fragmentary, and scattered, but nevertheless superior to the pure and simple belief they replace; this result is obtained passively, that is to say, without intervention of the will, and by the ordinary means indicated by religions, in particular by prayer and the performance of prescribed works, for all this does not yet leave the realm of the ectosteric.

At a much higher degree, and even already profoundly separate from this one, are those who, having extended their consciousness to the extreme limits of integral individuality, manage to perceive directly the higher states of their being, but without, however, actually participating in them; Here, we are in the realm of initiation, but this initiation, real in terms of the extension of individuality into its extracorporeal modalities, is still only theoretical and virtual in relation to higher states, since it does not currently lead to their possession. It produces incomparably more complete, more developed, and more coherent certainties than in the previous case, because it no longer belongs to the phenomenal realm; yet, the one who acquires them can be compared to a man who only knows light through the rays that reach him (in the previous case, he knew it only through reflections, or shadows projected into the field of his restricted individual consciousness like the prisoners in Plato's symbolic cave), whereas, to know light perfectly in its intimate and essential reality, one must go back to its source and identify with that very source. This latter case corresponds to the fullness of real and effective initiation, that is, to the conscious and voluntary taking possession of the totality of states of being, according to the two senses we have indicated; this is the complete and final result of the incantation, quite different, as we see, from all those that mystics can attain through prayer, for it is nothing other than the very perfection of metaphysical knowledge; The Yogi of the Hindu tradition, or the Çûft of the Islamic tradition, if we understand these terms in their strict and true sense, is the one who has reached this supreme degree, and who has thus realized in his being the total possibility of the "Universal Man".)

THE LAND OF THE SUN

Among the localities, often difficult to identify, that play a role in the legend of the Holy Grail, some attach particular importance to Glastonbury, which is said to be the place where Joseph of Arimathea settled after his arrival in Great Britain, and where many other things have been attributed, as we shall see later. Undoubtedly, some of these interpretations are more or less questionable, and some seem to involve genuine confusion; but it is possible, however, that these very confusions may have some reasons that are not without interest from the point of view of "sacred geography" and the successive locations of certain traditional centers. This is what the singular discoveries presented in a recently published anonymous work[1] would seem to indicate. Certain points in this work might warrant some reservations, for example, regarding the interpretation of place names whose origin is more likely quite recent, but the essential part, along with the supporting maps, could hardly be considered purely fanciful. Glastonbury and the surrounding Somerset region would have constituted, in a very remote and perhaps "prehistoric" era, an immense "stellar temple," defined by the tracing on the ground of gigantic effigies representing the constellations, arranged in a circular figure that is like an image of the celestial vault projected onto the surface of the earth. This would represent a body of work reminiscent, in essence, of that of the ancient mound-builders of North America; the natural arrangement of the rivers and hills could, moreover, have suggested this layout, which would indicate that the location was not chosen arbitrarily, but rather by virtue of a certain "predetermination"; it is nonetheless true that, to complete and perfect the design, what the author calls "an art founded on the principles of Geometry" was required[2]. If these figures have been preserved in such a way as to still be recognizable today, it is supposedly because the monks of Glastonbury, until the time of the Reformation, carefully maintained them, which implies that they must

1 A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple at the Stars, its giant effigies described from air views. maps, and from The High History of the Holy Graal. (John M. Watkins, London).

2 This expression is clearly intended to suggest that the tradition to which this art belonged continued in what subsequently became the Masonic tradition.

have retained knowledge of the tradition inherited from their distant predecessors, the Druids, and undoubtedly others before them, for, if the deductions drawn from the position of the constellations represented are correct, the origin of these figures would date back to nearly three thousand years before the Christian era[3].

As a whole, the circular figure in question is an immense Zodiac, which the author sees as the prototype of the "Round Table"; and, in fact, the latter, around which twelve principal figures are seated, is indeed linked to a representation of the zodiacal cycle; but this does not mean that these figures are nothing other than the constellations, an interpretation that is too "naturalistic," for the truth is that the constellations themselves are merely symbols; and it should also be remembered that this "zodiacal" constitution is very generally found in spiritual centers corresponding to various traditional forms[4]. Therefore, it seems to us quite doubtful that All the stories concerning the "Knights of the Round Table" and the "quest for the Grail" may be nothing more than a dramatized description, so to speak, of the starry effigies of Glastonbury and the topography of the region; but that they should correspond to these is all the less improbable as it is, in essence, entirely consistent with the general laws of symbolism; and there would even be no reason to be surprised if this correspondence were precise enough to be verified even in minor details of the legend, which, moreover, we do not intend to examine here.

That said, it is important to note that the Glastonbury Zodiac presents some peculiarities which, from our point of view, could be regarded as marks of its "authenticity"; and, first of all, it seems that the sign of Libra is absent from it. Now, as we have explained elsewhere[5], the celestial Libra was not always zodiacal, but was initially polar, this name having been originally applied either to the Great Bear or to the

3 It would also seem, according to various indications, that the Templars had a certain part in this preservation, which would be consistent with their supposed connection with the Knights of the Round Table, and with the role of guardians of the Grail attributed to them. It is also worth noting that Templar establishments appear to have been frequently located near places where megalithic monuments or other prehistoric remains are found, and perhaps this should be seen as more than a simple coincidence.

4 See *The King of the World*, pp.58-59

5 Ibid., pp. 115-116.

constellation of the Great Bear and the Little Bear, constellations to whose symbolism, by a remarkable coincidence, the name of Arthur is directly linked. It would be reasonable to assume that this figure, at the center of which the Pole is marked by a serpent's head that clearly refers to the "Celestial Dragon"[6], must be attributed to a period prior to the transfer of Libra into the Zodiac; and, moreover, and this is particularly important to consider, the symbol of the polar Libra is related to the name Tula originally given to the Hyperborean center of the Primordial Tradition, a center of which the "stellar temple" in question was undoubtedly one of the images formed, in the succession of times, as seats of spiritual powers emanating from or derived more or less directly from this same Tradition[7].

On another occasion[8], we mentioned, in connection with the designation of the "Adamic" language as the "Syriac language," the primitive Syria whose name properly means "the solar land," and which Homer speaks of as an island located "beyond Ogygia," which only allows us to identify it with the Hyperborean Thuli or Tula; and "there are the revolutions of the Sun," an enigmatic expression which can naturally refer to the "circumpolar" nature of these revolutions, but which, at the same time, can also allude to a tracing of the zodiacal cycle on this land itself, which would explain why such a tracing was reproduced in a region intended to be an image of this center. We are now approaching the explanation for these confusions we mentioned at the beginning, since they could have arisen, in a somewhat normal way, from the assimilation of the image to the original center; and, in particular, it is very difficult to see anything other than a confusion of this kind in the identification of Glastonbury with the Isle of Avalon[9].

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6 Cf. the Sepher Ietsirah: The Dragon is in the middle of the sky like a king on his throne. The 'Wisdom of the Serpent', to which the author alludes in this regard, could, in a certain sense, be identified here with that of the seven polar Rishis. It is also curious to note that the dragon, among the Celts, is the symbol of the leader, and that Arthur is the son of Uther Pendragon.

7 This also allows us to understand certain relationships noted by the author between the symbolism of the Pole and that of the Terrestrial Paradise, particularly with regard to the presence of the tree and the serpent; in all this, it is always a question of the figure of the primordial center, and the three poles of the triangle are also related to symbolism.

8 . See our article in *La Science des Lettres*, February 1931 issue

9 It has also been suggested that this is the 'dregs of glass', which are mentioned in certain parts of the Grail legend; it is probable that, here again, it is a matter of confusion with some other more hidden center, or, if you will, more distant in space and time, although this designation probably does not apply to the primordial center itself.

Indeed, such an identification is incompatible with the fact that this island is always considered an inaccessible place; and, on the other hand, it also contradicts the much more plausible opinion that sees in the same region of Somerset the "kingdom of Logres," which is indeed said to have been located in Great Britain; and it is possible that this "kingdom of Logres," which would have been regarded as a sacred territory, which took its name from the Celtic Lug, which evokes both the idea of the "Word" and that of "Light." As for the name Avalon, it is clearly identical to that of Ablun or Belen, that is to say, the Celtic and Hyperborean Apollo[10], so that the Isle of Avalon is yet another designation for the "solar earth," which was, moreover, symbolically transported from the North to the West at a certain time, corresponding to one of the main changes that occurred in the traditional forms during our Manvantara[11].

These considerations lead us to other, perhaps even stranger, observations: an idea that seems inexplicable at first glance is that of attributing the origin of the Glastonbury Zodiac to the Phoenicians; It is true that many more or less hypothetical things are usually attributed to this people, but the very assertion of their existence in such a remote period seems even more questionable. However, what is noteworthy is that the Phoenicians inhabited "historical" Syria; could the name of the people have been subject to the same transfer as that of the country itself? What would at least suggest this is its connection with the symbolism of the Phoenix; indeed, according to Josephus, the capital of early Syria was Heliopolis, the "City of the Sun," whose name was later given to the Egyptian city of On; and it is to the first Heliopolis, and not to that of Egypt, that this cyclical symbolism of the Phoenix and its rebirths should actually be attributed. Now, according to Diodorus

10 We know that Mont-Saint-Michel was formerly called Tombelaine, that is to say, the Tumulus or the mount of Belen (and not the tomb of Helen, according to a completely modern and fanciful interpretation); the substitution of the name of the solar archangel for that of Belen obviously changes nothing as to the meaning; and, curiously, we also find Saint-Michaels Hill in the region corresponding to the ancient kingdom of Lugres.

11 This transposition, like that of the sapta-riksha of the Great Bear to the Pleiades, corresponds in particular to a change in the starting point of the year, first solstice and then equinox. The meaning of apple attached to the name of Avalon, undoubtedly secondarily, in the Celtic languages, is in no way in opposition to what we have just said, for it then refers to the golden apples of the Garden of the Hesperides, that is to say, the solar fruits of the World Tree.

Siculus, one of the sons of Helios or the Sun, named Actis, founded the city of Heliopolis; and it so happens that this name, Actis, exists as a place name near Glastonbury, and under conditions that directly link it to the Phoenix, into which, according to other interpretations, this "prince of Heliopolis" himself was supposedly transformed. Naturally, the author, misled by the multiple and successive uses of the same name, believes that this refers to the Heliopolis of Egypt, just as he believes he can speak literally of the "historical" Phoenicians, which is all the more excusable since the ancients, in the "classical" period, already quite often made such confusions; only knowledge of the true Hyperborean origin of these traditions, which he does not seem to suspect, can allow us to restore the real meaning of all these designations.

In the Glastonbury Zodiac, the sign of Aquarius is represented, rather unexpectedly, by a bird which the author rightly believes to be the Phoenix, and which carries an object that is none other than the "cup of immortality," that is, the Grail itself; and the comparison made in this regard with the Hindu Garuda is certainly very apt[12]. Furthermore, according to Arab tradition, the Rukh or Phoenix never lands anywhere other than Mount Qdf, which is the "polar mountain"; and it is from this same "polar mountain," designated by other names, that, in Hindu and Persian traditions, comes the sema, which is identified with Yamrita or "ambrosia," the drink or food of immortality[13].

There is also the figure of another bird which is more difficult to interpret exactly, and which perhaps represents the sign of Libra, but whose position is, in any case, is much closer to the Pole than to the Zodiac, since one of its wings even corresponds to the stars of the Great Bear, which, according to what we have said previously, could only confirm this supposition. As for the nature of this bird, two hypotheses are considered: that of a dove, which could indeed have some connection with the symbolism of the Grail, and that of a goose or, we might say rather, a swan brooding over the "World Egg", that

12 See our article on The Language of the Birds, November 1931 issue. The sign of Aquarius is usually represented by Ganymede, whose connection with ambrosia on the one hand, and with the eagle of Zeus, itself identical to Garuda, on the other, is well known.

13 See *The King of the World*, pp. 60-61

is to say, an equivalent of the Hindu Hamsa; In truth, the latter seems far preferable to us, the symbol of the swan being closely linked to the Hyperborean Apollo, and even more specifically in the respect we have considered here, since the Greeks made Kyknos the son of Apollo and Hyria, that is to say, of the Sun and the "solar earth," for Hyria is simply another form of Syria, so that it is indeed always the "sacred island" that is being referred to, and it would be quite surprising if the swan were not found in its representation[14].

There are many other points that certainly deserve attention, such as, for example, the connection between the name "Somerset" and that of the "land of the Cimmerians," and with various names of peoples whose similarity most likely indicates much less a racial kinship than a shared tradition; but that would take us too far, and we have said enough to show the extent of a field of research that is still almost entirely unexplored, and to give a glimpse of the consequences that could be drawn from it with regard to the links between the various traditions and their filiation from the primordial Tradition.

14 The merging of the two figures of Hamsa and Garuda is also quite natural, since they are sometimes even combined into a single bird which seems to be the original source of the heraldic two-headed eagle, although this one appears more as a double Garuda, the Hamsa-Garuda bird naturally having a swan's head and an eagle's head.

February 1936

ON THE NOTION OF AN ELITE

We have often had occasion to point out the linguistic abuses characteristic of our time, which are among the clearest symptoms of the disorder and confusion that reign everywhere: it sometimes seems that words have completely lost their meaning, so frequently are they used in senses that have nothing in common with what they should normally signify. This is why we always strive to return as closely as possible to the original meaning, for this is, in short, the only way to restore to language the accuracy and precision of which it is capable; but we recognize that, like anything that goes against certain habits, this cannot be done without some precautions, and that in such cases, it is always necessary to provide all the necessary explanations to avoid more or less unfortunate misunderstandings.

Sometimes, these common distortions of the meaning of words take on a veritable air of caricature and parody; We have pointed this out elsewhere, particularly with regard to words such as “tradition” and “religion,” the former applied to customs devoid of any real value or transcendent content, and the latter to manifestations of the most banal human sentimentality. Even the word “initiation,” which should be used more strictly because of the domain to which it refers, is not immune to this kind of distortion, since some use it to designate the rudimentary teaching of some kind of “knowledge,” and it even appears at the beginning of works that, in fact, amount to nothing more than the lowest form of “popularization.” There is not even the word “adept,” the exclusive title of those who have reached the highest degree of initiation, which has not, through a confusion even stranger and more inexplicable than all others, come to qualify the simple adherents of anything, even the most profane of associations. 1 It is again on an abuse of the same kind that we wish to draw attention now, because

we have had to observe it more and more frequently for some time, and because moreover it is a word which we ourselves have used quite often in its true sense, without thinking it useful then to insist on all that separates this from those false conceptions which had not yet appeared to us as so widespread, and which perhaps really were not yet, for all this is visibly getting worse more and more rapidly. This word is “elite,” which we used to designate something that no longer exists in the current state of the Western world, and whose constitution, or rather reconstitution, appeared to us as the primary and essential condition for intellectual recovery and a restoration of tradition. Now, however, it happens that, at every moment and from all sides, we hear talk not of the elite in this sense, but of “elites,” a term used to encompass all individuals who surpass the “average” in any field of activity whatsoever, even the most inferior and the most devoid of any intellectual capacity. First, let us note that the plural form is entirely nonsensical here: even without straying from a purely lay perspective, one could already say that this word is one of those that cannot be pluralized, because its meaning is, in a way, that of a “superlative,” or because it implies the idea of something that, by its very nature, is incapable of fragmenting and subdividing; but, for our purposes, it is necessary to appeal here to some other, deeper considerations.

Sometimes, for greater precision and to avoid any possible misunderstanding, we have used the expression “intellectual elite”; But, in truth, there is almost a pleonasm here, for it is inconceivable that the elite could be anything other than intellectual, or, if you prefer, spiritual—these two words being essentially equivalent for us, since we absolutely refuse to confuse true intellectuality with “rationality.” The reason for this is that the distinction that defines the elite can, by definition, only be made “from above,” that is, in relation to the highest possibilities of being; and this is easily understood by reflecting a little on the proper meaning of the word, as it results directly from its etymology.

Indeed, from a strictly traditional point of view, what gives the word “elite” its full value is that it is derived from “chosen”; and this, let us

state clearly, is precisely what led us to use it as we have, in preference to any other. But we still need to clarify a little more how this should be understood. We shouldn't stop at the religious and exoteric sense, which is undoubtedly the one in which we most commonly speak of the "elect," although this is certainly something that could easily lend itself to an analogical transposition appropriate to what is actually at stake; but there is something else, an indication of which can even be found in the well-known and often-quoted, but perhaps insufficiently understood, Gospel passage: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

Essentially, we could say that the elite, as we understand it, represents all those who possess the "qualifications" required for initiation, and who are naturally always a minority among humankind; in a sense, all are "called," because of the "central" position that human beings occupy in this state of existence, but there are few "elect," and, under the conditions of the present age, there are certainly fewer than ever. One might object that this elite always exists, by the very nature of things, because, however few those who are "qualified" may be, there are nevertheless at least some, and besides, here, the number matters little; this is true, but they thus represent only a virtual elite, or, one might say, the possibility of an elite, and, for this elite to be effectively constituted, they themselves must first become aware of their "qualification." Furthermore, it must be clearly understood that, as we have already explained, initiatory "qualifications" are not all exclusively intellectual, but also involve the consideration of other elements; but this does not change what we have said about the definition of the elite, since, whatever these "qualifications" may be in themselves, they must always be considered with a view to an essentially intellectual or spiritual realization, and this is where their sole purpose lies.

Normally, all those who are thus "qualified" should, by that very fact, have the possibility of obtaining initiation; if this is not so in fact, it is solely due to the present state of the Western world, and, in this regard, the disappearance of the conscious elite and the absence of adequate initiatory organizations to receive it appear as two closely linked facts, correlative in a way, without perhaps even needing to ask which one

could have been a consequence of the other. But, on the other hand, it is evident that initiatory organizations which would be truly and fully what they should be, and not simply more or less degenerate vestiges of what once was, could only be reformed if they found elements possessing not only the necessary initial aptitude, but also the effective dispositions determined by the awareness of this aptitude, for it is primarily up to them to "aspire" to initiation, and it would be to reverse the relationship to think that initiation should come to them independently of this aspiration. This is why the reconstitution of the elite—by which we mean the elite conscious of its potential within the initiatory order, even though this potential may remain undeveloped until traditional affiliation is achieved—is the primary condition upon which everything else depends, just as the presence of pre-prepared materials is indispensable for the construction of a building, although these materials can obviously only fulfill their purpose once they have found their place within the building itself.

Assuming that initiation has indeed been attained by those who belong to the elite, it will still be necessary to consider, for each of them, the possibility of progressing further or less, of attaining possession of this or that degree, according to the extent of their own particular potential. Therefore, for the passage from one degree to another, it will be necessary to consider what could be called an elite within the elite itself, and it is in this sense that some have spoken of the "elite of the elite." In other words, one can envision successive "elections," increasingly restricted in the number of individuals involved, always operating "from above" and following the same principle, and corresponding, in short, to the different degrees of the initiatory hierarchy[1]. Thus, step by step, one can reach the supreme "election," that which refers to the "adeptship," that is, to the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of all initiation; and, consequently, the "elect" in the fullest sense of the word, the one who could be called the "perfect elect," will be the one who achieves the realization of the "Supreme Identity"[2].

1 It is in this sense that the word chosen is found, for example, in the designation of certain higher degrees of various Masonic rites, which, of course, certainly does not mean that there has always been a real awareness of its meaning and all that it implies.

2 In Islamic tradition, El-Mustafa, "the Chosen One", is one of the names of the Prophet; it therefore

After these considerations, which we believe sufficient to clarify the question of the elite and to at least give a glimpse of all that it truly entails, we will return to the remarks we made at the beginning, and we will add this: it is certainly impossible to prevent the misuse of any word, “elite” as well as any other; and, if this misuse were to force us to avoid its use, we do not see what terms would ultimately remain at our disposal. But, moreover, we must especially reclaim those words which, prior to any profane distortion, have been, in a way, consecrated by traditional usage, and this is indeed the case here; as “technical terms,” they are linked in a certain way to initiatory symbolism itself, and it is not because laypeople sometimes seize upon a symbol they are incapable of understanding, distort its meaning, and make an illegitimate application of it, that this symbol ceases to be in itself what it truly is.

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effectively refers to him as Universal Man.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FISH

The symbolism of the fish, which is to be found in numerous traditional forms, including Christianity, is exceedingly complex and has many aspects which need to be clearly distinguished one from another. As to the earliest origins of this symbol, it seems to be of Nordic or even Hyperborean provenance. Its presence has in fact been verified in North Germany and in Scandinavia[1], and in these regions it is in all likelihood nearer its starting-point than in Central Asia where doubtless it was brought by the great current which, issuing directly from the Primordial Tradition, was later to give birth to the doctrines of India and Persia. It is to be noted moreover, generally speaking, that certain aquatic animals figure above all in the symbolism of Northern peoples: to give just one example, the octopus is particularly widespread among the Scandinavians and the Celts, and is also found in archaic Greece as one of the chief motifs in Mycenian ornamentation.[2] Another fact which bears out these considerations is that in India the manifestation in the form of the fish (Matsya-avatara) is held to be the first of all the manifestations of Vishnu,[3] the one which marks the very beginning of the present cycle, and that it is thus directly related to the starting-point of the Primordial Tradition. It must not be forgotten, in this connection, that Vishnu represents the divine Principle especially in its world-preserving aspect. This function comes very close to that of Saviour, which is, more precisely, a particular instance of the wider function of Preserver; and it is truly as Saviour that Vishnu appears in some of his manifestations which correspond to phases of crisis in the history of the

1 Cf. L Charbonneau-Lassay, 'Le Poisson' in Regnabit, December 1926

2 The arms of the octopus are generally straight in the Scandinavian figurations, while they are wound in spirals in Mycenian ornaments. In the latter, one also sees very frequently the swastika, or figures that are manifestly derived from it. The symbol of the octopus relates to the zodiacal sign of Cancer, which corresponds to the summer solstice and to the 'depth of the Waters'. It is easy to understand from this that it could sometimes have been taken in a malefic sense, the summer solstice being the Janua Inferni.

3 We must call attention to the fact that we do not say 'incarnations', as is commonly done in the West, for the word is quite inexact. The proper sense of the word avatara is 'descent' of the divine Principle into the manifested world.

world.[4] Now the idea of the Saviour is also explicitly attached to the Christian symbolism of the fish, for the last letter ofthe Greek Ichthus is interpreted as the initial of Soter.[5] Doubtless there is nothing surprising in this, seeing that it has to do with Christ; but there are none the less emblems which allude more directly to certain of his other attributes, and which do not formally express the function of 'Saviour'.

In the form of the fish, at the end of the Maha-Yuga which precedes our own, Vishnu appears to Satyavrata[6] who is to become, under the name Vaivasvata,[7] the Manu or Legislator of the present cycle. He announces to him that the world is going to be destroyed by flood, and he orders him to construct an ark in which the seeds of the future world are to be enclosed. Then, in this very same form, he himself guides the ark over the waters during the cataclysm; and this representation of the ark guided by the divine fish is all the more remarkable for having its equivalent also in Christian symbolism.[8] The Matsya-avatara has yet another aspect which is particularly worthy of note: after the cataclysm, that is at the beginning of the present Maha-Yuga, he brings mankind the Veda, which must be understood, according to the etymological signification of the word (derived from the root vid, to know), as the Science of sciences, or Sacred Knowledge in its entirety. This is a

^very clear allusion to the primordial Revelation, or to the 'non-human' origin of Tradition. It is said that the Veda subsists perpetually, being in

4 Let us also note in this connection that the last manifestation, the Kalki-avatara, 'He who is mounted on the white horse', and who must come at the end of this cycle, is described in the Purünas in terms rigorously identical to those found in the Apocalypse, where they relate to the 'second coming' of Christ.

5 When the fish is taken as the symbol of Christ, its Greek name, Ichthus, is considered as formed by the initial letters of the words Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter (Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour).

6 This names signifies, literally, 'dedicated to the Truth'; and this idea of the "Truth' is to be found in the designation of Satya-Yuga, the first of the four ages into which the Maha-Yuga is divided. One may note also the similarity of the word Satya with the name Saturn, considered in Western antiquity precisely as the regent of the Golden Age; and in the Hindu tradition, the sphere of Saturn is called Satya-Loka.

7 Issued from Vivasvat, one of the twelve Adityas who are regarded as so many forms of the Sun, in correspondence with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and of whom it is said that they must appear simultaneously at the end of the cycle.

8 Charbonneau-Lassay, in the study mentioned above, cites 'the pontifical ornament decorated with embroidered figures which enclose the remains of the Lombard bishop of the eighth or ninth century, and on which is seen a barque carried by a fish, image of Christ supporting the Church'. Now. the ark has often been regarded as a figure of the Church, just as the barque (which, in ancient times was, with the keys, one of the emblems of Janus; cf., Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporelle, ch. 8). It is this one and the same idea that we find expressed here both in Hindu and Christian symbolism.

itself prior to all the worlds; but it is as if hidden or enveloped during the cosmic cataclysms which separate the different cycles, after which it must be manifested anew. The affirmation of the perpetuity of the Veda, moreover, is directly related to the cosmological theory of the primordiality of sound among the sensible qualities (as the quality that belongs to ether, akasha, which is the first of the elements).[9] And this theory is ultimately the same as what other traditions express in speaking of creation by the Word. The primordial sound is this Divine Word by which, according to the first chapter of the Hebrew Genesis, all things have been made.'[10] This is why it is said that the Rishis or the Sages of the earliest times 'heard' the Veda. Revelation, being like creation itself a work of the Word, is strictly speaking an 'audition' for him who receives it; and the term which denotes it is shruti, which means literally 'that which is heard'.[11]

During the cataclysm that separates this Maha-Yuga from the previous one, the Veda was enclosed in a state of envelopment in the conch (shankha), which is one of the chief attributes of Vishnu. The conch is in fact held to contain the imperishable primordial sound (akshara), that is the monosyllable Om, which is par excellence the name of the manifested Word in the three worlds while being at the same time, by another correspondence of its three elements or matras, the essence of the triple Veda.[12]

Like Vishnu in India-and also under the form of a fish-the Chaldean Oannés (whom some have regarded expressly as a figure of the Christ)[13] also teaches the primordial doctrine to men, a striking example of the unity existing between traditions that are in appearance most different-a unity which would remain inexplicable if we did not admit their derivation from a common source. The symbolism of Oannés or of

9 Cf., our study of 'La Théorie hindoue des cinq éléments', in Etudes Traditionnelles, August-September, 1935.

10 Cf, also the beginning of the Gospel according to St John.

11 On the distinction between shruti and smriti and on their relationships, see Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta, Ch. 1.

12 On the presence of this same ideogram AVM in ancient Christian symbolism, cf., The King of the World, Ch. 4.

13 In this connection it is interesting to note that the head of the fish, which gave its form to the head-dress of the priests of Oannés, is also the form of the mitre of Christian bishops.

Dagon seems moreover to be not only that of the fish in general, but to be connected more especially with that of the dolphin which with the Greeks was related to the cult of Apollo[14] and had given its name to Delphi; and it is very significant that it was formally recognised that this cult came from the Hyperboreans. The connection between Oannés and the dolphin (which, on the contrary, is not specifically indicated in the manifestation of Vishnu), is above all implicit in the close connection between the symbol of the dolphin and that of the 'Woman of the sea' (Aphrodite Anadyomene of the Greeks).[15] It is she, under diverse names such as Ishtar, Atergatis and Dercéto, who appears as the consort of Oannés or of his equivalents, that is, as a complementary aspect of the same principle, its Shakti,[16] as the Hindu tradition would call her. This is the 'Lady of the Lotus' (Ishtar, like Esther in Hebrew, means 'lotus', and sometimes also 'lily', two flowers which often replace one another in symbolism),[17] like the Kwan-yin of the Far East, who in one of her forms is also the 'Goddess of the depths of the sea'.

To complete these remarks, we will add that the figure of the Babylonian Ea, the 'Lord of the Deep', represented as half-goat and half-fish[18], is identical with that of the sign Capricorn in the Zodiac and may even have been its prototype. Now it is important to recall in this respect that in the annual cycle the sign of Capricorn corresponds to the winter solstice. The Makara which, in the Hindu zodiac, takes the place of Capricorn, is not unlike the dolphin. The symbolic opposition between the dolphin and the octopus must therefore be brought back to the opposition of the two solstitial signs of Capricorn and Cancer (in India Cancer is represented by the crab) or the Gates of Heaven and

14 It is this which explains the connection of the dolphin symbol with the idea of light (cf.. L Charbonneau-Lassay, 'Le Dauphin et le crustacé' in Regnabit, January 1927. and in Bestiaire du Christ, ch. 98, 5). Also to be noted is the function attributed by the ancients to the dolphin as saviour of the shipwrecked, of which the legend of Arion offers one of the best known examples.

15 This 'Woman of the sea' must not be confused with the mermaid, though she may sometimes be represented by a similar form.

16 The Dea Syra is strictly speaking the 'solar Goddess', just as the primeval Syria is the 'Land of the Sun', as we have already explained, its name being identical with Surya, the Sanskrit name for the Sun.

17 In Hebrew, the two names Esther and Sushana have the same meaning and, moreover, they are numerically equivalent: both add up to 661. and the additions before each of them, of the letter he, which signifies the definite article of which the value is 5, brings the number to 666, from which some have not failed to draw more or less fantastic deductions; for our part, we mention this only as a mere curiosity.

18 Moreover Ea holds before him-like the Egyptian scarab-a ball which represents the World Egg.

Hell, Janua Caeli and Janua Inferni[19] and this also explains why these same two animals are found associated in certain cases, for example under the tripod of Delphi and under the feet of the coursers that draw the solar chariot, as indicating the two extreme points reached by the Sun in its annual march. It is important not to confuse the two signs in question with another sign, that of Pisces, the symbolism of which is different and must be related exclusively to that of the fish in general, especially in its connection with the idea of the 'principle of life' and of 'fertility; (above all in the spiritual sense, like 'posterity' in the traditional language of the Far East). These are other aspects which can likewise be related to the Word, but which must none the less be distinguished clearly from those which manifest it, as we have seen, under its two attributes of Revealer and Saviour.

19 The function of the dolphin as guide of sanctified souls towards the 'Islands of the Blessed' also refers obviously to the Janua Carli.

March 1936

ON THE INITIATIC HIERARCHY

The allusion we made to the initiatory hierarchy, when speaking of the notion of "elite" as capable, beyond its general meaning, of being considered at several different levels, needs further clarification in certain respects, because frequent confusion arises on this subject, not only in the purely secular world, which is hardly surprising, but even among those who, in one capacity or another, should normally be more knowledgeable about what is being discussed. Moreover, it seems that any idea of hierarchy, even outside the initiatory domain, is particularly obscured in our time, and that it is one of those against which the negations of the modern spirit are most particularly vehemently attacked, which, in truth, is quite consistent with the anti-traditional character of the latter, a character of which "egalitarianism" in all its forms is, in short, simply one aspect. It is nonetheless strange to see this "egalitarianism" accepted and even proclaimed by members of initiatory organizations which, however diminished or deviated they may be in many respects, necessarily always retain a certain hierarchical structure, without which they could not subsist in any way; there is obviously something paradoxical, even contradictory, about this which can only be explained by the extreme disorder that currently reigns everywhere. Moreover, there is no need to dwell on it further here, for it is quite clear that we cannot consider addressing those who prejudicedly deny any hierarchy; what we meant was that, under these conditions, it is not surprising that this idea is sometimes more or less misunderstood even by those who still accept it, and that they sometimes misinterpret its various applications.

As we have just said, every initiatory organization is, in itself, essentially hierarchical, so much so that this could be seen as one of its fundamental characteristics, although, of course, it is not exclusively

unique to it, and it can also exist in a certain sense not only in traditional "external" organizations, but even in secular organizations, at least insofar as these are constituted, in their order,

according to normal rules. However, the initiatory hierarchy has something special that distinguishes it from all others: it is essentially formed by degrees of "knowledge," with all that this word implies when understood in its true sense, for this is what the very degrees of initiation consist of, and no other consideration can intervene. Some have represented these degrees as a series of concentric enclosures that must be crossed successively, which is a very accurate image, since it is indeed a "center" that one must approach more and more, until finally reaching it at the last degree; others have also compared the initiatory hierarchy to a pyramid, whose courses gradually narrow as one ascends from the base to the summit, so as to arrive here again at a single point that plays the same role as the center in the previous figure; whatever the symbolism adopted in this regard, it is precisely this hierarchy of degrees that we had in mind when discussing the distinctions occurring within the elite.

It must be clearly understood that these degrees can be indefinitely multiple, as can the states to which they correspond and which they imply in their realization, for it is truly a question of different states once knowledge is effective, as we have already had occasion to explain many times. Consequently, the degrees existing in any initiatory organization will never represent anything more than a classification, necessarily "schematic," as in all things, and ultimately limited to the consideration of certain principal or more clearly characterized stages; And, depending on the perspective adopted to establish such a classification, the degrees thus distinguished may naturally be more or less numerous, without this implying any contradiction or incompatibility whatsoever, for, fundamentally, this question does not touch upon any doctrinal principle and simply pertains to the methods that may be particular to each initiatory organization, even within the same traditional form, and all the more so when one moves from one of these forms to another. In truth, the only perfectly clear distinction

in all this can be that between the “lesser mysteries” and the “greater mysteries,” that is to say, between what relates respectively to the human condition and the higher states of being; everything else is, in the domain of each, merely subdivisions that may be pushed further or less far for contingent reasons.

On the other hand, it is also important to understand that the distribution of members of an initiatory organization into its different degrees is, in a way, only “symbolic” in relation to the actual hierarchy, because initiation, at any given degree, can, in many cases, be only virtual; if it were always effective, the two hierarchies would coincide entirely; but, if such a thing is conceivable in principle, it must be acknowledged that it is hardly feasible in practice, and even less so in certain organizations where these have undergone a more or less pronounced degeneration and where they too readily admit members, most of whom are quite incapable of obtaining more than a mere virtual initiation. However, while these are inevitable shortcomings to a certain extent, they in no way affect the very notion of the initiatory hierarchy, which remains perfectly independent of all such circumstances; a state of affairs, however unfortunate, cannot undermine a principle and cannot in any way affect it; and the distinction we have just indicated naturally resolves the objection that might arise in the minds of those who have had occasion to observe, in the initiatory organizations of which they may have some knowledge, the presence, even at the higher levels, of individuals who are all too clearly lacking in any effective initiation.

Another important point is this: an initiatory organization comprises not only a hierarchy of degrees, but also a hierarchy of functions, and these are two distinct things that must be carefully not confused, for the function with which someone may be invested, at whatever level, does not confer upon them a new degree and does not in any way modify the one they already possess. The function has, so to speak, only an “accidental” character in relation to the degree: the exercise of a given function may require the possession of a particular degree, but it is never necessarily attached to that degree, however high it may be; and, moreover, the function may only be temporary, it may end for many

reasons, whereas the degree always constitutes a permanent acquisition, obtained once and for all, and which can never be lost in any way, whether it be actual or even merely virtual initiation.

The truly essential initiatory hierarchy is therefore that of degrees; since it is properly a question of "knowledge" in all initiation, it is quite clear that being invested with a function adds nothing in this respect; it may give, for example, the ability to transmit the initiation to others, but not that of attaining a higher state oneself. There can be no degree or state that is superior to that of the adept; whether those who have attained it exercise certain functions in addition or none at all, makes absolutely no difference in this respect; and what is true in this regard for the supreme degree is also true, at all levels of the hierarchy, for each of the lower degrees[1]. Consequently, when one speaks of the initiatory hierarchy without further specification, it must be clearly understood that it is always the hierarchy of degrees that is being referred to; It is this one, and this one alone, which, as we said previously, defines the successive "elections" gradually progressing from simple initiatory "attachment" to identification with the "Center", that is to say, in other words, to the realization of the "Supreme Identity".

1 Let us recall that the adept is properly one who has attained the fullness of initiation. Some schools, however, make a distinction between what they call a "minor adept" and a "major adept"; these terms should then be understood, at least originally, as designating one who has reached initiation respectively in the order of the "lesser mysteries" and in that of the "greater mysteries".

THE DOUBLE SPIRAL

In his article “Hellenic Tradition and Greek Art” (December 1935 issue), Mr. Elie Lebasquais very rightly drew attention to the importance of the role played, in the symbolic “ornamentation” of archaic Greece, by the double spiral, which, he says, “can be regarded as the planar projection of the two hemispheres of the androgyne, offers the image of the alternating rhythm of evolution and involution, of birth and death, in short, represents manifestation in its dual aspect”; and we believe it is worthwhile to offer some further insights into this symbolism.

First of all, it should be noted that this representation can be considered in both a “macrocosmic” and a “microcosmic” sense; because of their analogy, one can always move from one to the other through a suitable adaptation; But it is primarily to the first that we will refer directly here, for it is in relation to the symbolism of the “World Egg” that the most remarkable parallels arise. From this perspective, the two spirals can be considered as indicating a cosmic force acting in opposite directions in the two hemispheres, which, in their most extensive application, are naturally the two halves of the “World Egg,” the points around which these two spirals wind being the two poles. It can be noted immediately that this is closely related to the two opposing directions of rotation of the swastika, these essentially representing the same revolution of the world around its axis, but viewed respectively from one and the other of the two poles; and these two directions of rotation indeed express the dual action of the cosmic force in question.

On the other hand, it is easy to see the similarity of this figure to the Far Eastern symbol of yang, in which the two semicircles that form the line internally delimiting the two light and dark parts of the figure

correspond to the two preceding spirals, and their centers to the two poles. This also brings us back to the idea of "androgyny," since the yang principle, represented by the light part, is considered masculine, and the y principle, represented by the dark part, feminine; these two principles are therefore in reality complementary, but their respective actions, in all areas of manifestation, appear to be contrary. We can therefore speak either of the dual action of a single force, as we did earlier, or of two forces produced by the polarization of this single force and centered on the two poles, and which in turn produce, through the actions and reactions resulting from their very differentiation, the development of the potentialities enveloped in the "World Egg"[1].

It is worth noting that these same two forces are also represented differently, though fundamentally equivalent, in other traditional symbols, notably by two helical lines winding in opposite directions around a vertical axis, as seen, for example, in certain forms of the Brahma-danda or Brahmanic staff, which is an image of the "World Axis," and where this double winding is precisely related to the two opposing orientations of the swastika; in the human being, these two lines are the two nadis, or subtle currents of right and left, or positive and negative (ida and pingala)[2]. Another identical representation is that of the two serpents of the caduceus, which is also linked to the general symbolism of the serpent in its two opposing aspects; and, in this respect, the double spiral can also be seen as representing a serpent coiled upon itself in two opposite directions; this serpent is then an "amphisbaena," whose two heads correspond to the two poles, and which, in itself, is equivalent to the two opposing serpents of the caduceus[3].

1 Those who like to seek points of comparison in the profane sciences could, for a microcosmic application, draw a parallel with the phenomenon of 'karyokinesis', the starting point of cell division.

2 The "Axis of the World," and the axis of the human being (represented physically by the spine), are also designated, due to their analogical correspondence, by the term Mēru-danda.

3 To explain the formation of the caduceus, it is said that Mercury saw two serpents fighting (chaos), and that he separated them (distinction of opposites) with his staff (determination of an axis along which chaos would be ordered), around which they coiled (balance of the two opposing forces, acting symmetrically with respect to the 'world axis'). It should also be noted that the caduceus is considered the characteristic attribute of two complementary functions of Mercury or Hermes: on the one hand, that of interpreter or messenger of the Gods, and, on the other hand, that of psychopomp guiding beings through their changes of state, or in the passages of a cycle of existence; these two functions correspond respectively to the two descending and ascending directions of the currents represented by the two serpents.

This does not take us away from the consideration of the "World Egg," for this, in various traditions, is frequently associated with the symbolism of the serpent; We might recall here the Egyptian Kneph, represented as a serpent producing the egg from its mouth (an image of the production of manifestation by the Word), and also, of course, the Druidic symbol of the "serpent's egg"[4]. On the other hand, the serpent is often described as inhabiting the waters, as seen in particular with the nāgas in the Hindu tradition, and it is also on these same waters that the "World Egg" floats; now, waters are the symbol of possibilities, and the development of these is represented by the spiral, hence the close association that sometimes exists between the spiral and the symbolism of waters[5]. If the "World Egg" is thus, in some cases, a "serpent's egg," it is also elsewhere a "swan's egg"; we are alluding here to the symbolism of Hamsa, which we have already discussed in a recent article[6]. Now, it often appears, and particularly in Etruscan representations, that the double spiral is surmounted by a bird; this is obviously the same as Hamsa, the swan that incubates the Brahmânda on the primordial waters, and which is also identified with the "spirit" or "divine breath" which, according to the beginning of the Hebrew Genesis, "was carried upon the face of the waters." What is no less remarkable is that, among the Greeks, from the egg of Leda, begotten by Zeus in the form of a swan, emerge the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, who correspond symbolically with the two hemispheres, and therefore with the two spirals we are considering, and who consequently represent their differentiation in this "swan's egg," that is to say, in short, the division of the "World Egg" into its two upper and lower halves[7]. We cannot, moreover, consider elaborating further here on the symbolism of the Dioscuri, which is quite complex, like that of all similar pairs formed of a mortal and an immortal, often represented as one white and the other black, the two hemispheres, one illuminated while the other

4 We know that this was actually represented by the sea urchin fossil.

5 This association is noted by Mr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his study Angel and Titan (see the review elsewhere). - In Chinese art, the spiral shape appears particularly in the representation of the 'double chaos' of the upper and lower waters (that is, formal and informal possibilities), often in relation to the symbolism of the Dragon.

6 See La Terre du Soleil, January 1936 issue

7 To clarify this meaning, the Dioscuri are depicted with hats of hemispherical shape.

is in darkness; we will only say that this symbolism, fundamentally, is quite closely related to that of the Devas and the Asuras, whose opposition is also related to the double meaning of the serpent, depending on whether it moves in an ascending or descending direction, around a vertical axis, or by unwinding or coiling on itself, as in the figure of the double spiral[8]. In ancient symbols, this double spiral is sometimes replaced by two sets of concentric circles drawn around two points that are also the poles: these are the celestial and infernal circles, to which the Devas and Asuras correspond precisely; in other words, they are the higher and lower states in relation to the human state, or the consequent and antecedent cycles in relation to the current cycle, which also corroborates the meaning of Yin-yang considered as a planar projection of the helix representing the multiple states of universal Existence. The two symbols are equivalent, and one can be considered a simple modification of the other; but the double spiral also indicates the continuity between the cycles; one could also say that it represents things from a "dynamic" aspect, while the concentric circles represent them from a "static" aspect[9].

When we speak here of the "dynamic" aspect, we are naturally still thinking of the action of the dual cosmic force, and more specifically in its relation to the inverse and complementary phases of all manifestation: "evolution" or development, unfolding, and "involution" enveloping, coiling, or again "katabasis" or downward march and "anabasis" or upward march, exit into the manifested and return into the unmanifested[10]. The double "spiration" (and we will note the kinship that exists in the very designation of the spiral and that of the "breath"

8 See the study by Mr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy already cited above — In the well-known symbolism of the "churn of the sea", the Devas and the Asuras pull in opposite directions the serpent coiled around the mountain which represents the 'world axis'.

9 If, instead of considering the whole of the universal manifestation, we were to limit ourselves to one world, that is to say to the state corresponding to the plane of the figure (assumed horizontal), the two halves of it would respectively represent the reflection of the higher states and the trace of the lower states in this world.

10 It is at least curious that Mr. Léon Daudet took the symbol of the double spiral for "diagram of the atmosphere." (Letters of Pagt-Bai: see the figure in Les Horreurs de la Guerre, and the considerations on the atmosphere in Melanehollay: he considers one of the two poles as the starting point and the other as the arrival point.) So that the spiral's path must be regarded as centrifugal on one side and centripetal on the other, which corresponds well to the two phases: evolutionary and involutionary; and what he calls atmosphere, in short, comprises the set of the two opposing currents of the cosmic force that we are considering here.

we spoke of earlier), is the universal “exhalation” and “inhalation,” by which are produced, according to Taoist language, the “condensations” and “dissipations,” resulting from the alternating action of the two principles Yin and Yang, or according to Hermetic terminology, the “coagulations” and “solutions”: for individual beings, these are births and deaths; for worlds, this is what Hindu tradition designates as the days and nights of Brahma; and, at all degrees, in the macrocosmic order and in the microcosmic order, corresponding phases are found in every cycle of existence, because they are the very expression of the law that governs the whole of universal manifestation.

April 1936

ON INITIATIC QUALIFICATIONS

In our previous articles, we have often alluded to initiatory qualifications, and we have received numerous questions on this subject from various quarters. To be honest, it is hardly possible to claim to treat it comprehensively, but at least we can offer some clarification. First of all, it must be clearly understood that these qualifications pertain exclusively to the individual. Indeed, if we were to consider only the personality or the "Self," there would be no distinction to be made in this respect between beings, and all would be equally qualified, without the slightest exception. But the question arises quite differently because individuality must necessarily be taken as the means and support of initiatory realization. Consequently, it must possess the aptitudes required to play this role, and this is not always the case. Individuality is, in this sense, merely the instrument of the true being. However, if this instrument has certain defects, it may be more or less completely unusable, or even entirely unsuitable for its intended purpose. There is nothing surprising in this, if one considers that, even in the realm of secular activities, what is possible for one person is not possible for another, and that, for example, the practice of a particular profession requires certain special aptitudes, both mental and physical. The essential difference is that, in this case, it is an activity that falls entirely within the individual sphere, which in no way or respect transcends it, whereas, with regard to initiation, the result to be achieved is, on the contrary, beyond the limits of individuality; but, once again, individuality must nonetheless be taken as the starting point, and this is a condition from which it is impossible to escape.

We can also say this: the being who undertakes the work of initiatory realization must necessarily begin from a certain state of manifestation, the one in which they are currently situated, and which comprises a

whole set of determined conditions: on the one hand, the conditions inherent to this state that define it in a general way, and, on the other hand, those which, within this same state, are particular to each individual and differentiate them from all others. It is evident that it is these latter conditions that must be considered with regard to qualifications, since this is something which, by definition, is not common to all individuals, but properly characterizes only those who belong, at least virtually, to the "elite," understood in the sense we have previously specified.

Now, it is essential to understand that individuality must be taken here as it actually is, with all its constituent elements, and that there can be qualifications concerning each of these elements, including the bodily element itself, which must in no way be treated, from this point of view, as something indifferent or negligible. Perhaps there would be no need to insist on this so much if we were not faced with the grossly simplified conception that modern Westerners have of the human being: not only is individuality for them the entire being, but this individuality itself is reduced to two parts supposedly completely separate from one another, the first being the body, and the second something rather poorly defined, which is designated indifferently by the most diverse and sometimes the least appropriate names. But the reality is quite different: the multiple elements of individuality, however one might classify them, are not thus isolated from one another, but form a whole in which there can be no radical and irreducible heterogeneity; and all of them, the body as well as the others, are, in the same way, manifestations or expressions of being in the various modalities of the individual domain. Between these modalities, there are correspondences such that what happens in one normally has repercussions in the others; It follows that, on the one hand, the state of the body can influence other modalities in a certain way, either favorably or unfavorably, and that, on the other hand, the reverse being no less true, it can provide signs that tangibly reflect the very state of these modalities; it is clear that these two complementary considerations are both important with regard to initiatory qualifications. All this would be perfectly obvious if the Western notion of "matter," Cartesian dualism, and more or less "mechanistic" conceptions had

not so obscured these things for most of our contemporaries; it is these contingent circumstances that compel us to dwell on such elementary considerations, which would otherwise suffice to state in a few words, without having to add the slightest explanation.

It goes without saying that the essential qualification, the one that dominates all the others, is a question of intellectual horizon—more or less broad. But it can happen that the possibilities of an intellectual order, while being present virtually in an individuality, are, due to the elements are, due to its inferior elements, prevented from developing, either temporarily or even permanently. This is the first reason for what could be called secondary qualifications; and there is a second reason that follows immediately from what we have just said: it is that, in these elements, which are the most accessible to observation, one can find signs of certain intellectual limitations; in this latter case, the secondary qualifications become, in a way, symbolic equivalents of the fundamental qualification itself. In the first case, on the contrary, it may be that they do not always have equal importance: thus, there may be obstacles opposing any initiation, even merely virtual, or only to an effective initiation, or even to the passage to higher or lower degrees; and it must also be added that there are special impediments that may concern only certain forms of initiation.

On this last point, it suffices to recall that the diversity of initiation methods, whether from one traditional form to another or within the same traditional form, is precisely intended to compensate for the diversity of individual aptitudes; it would obviously have no reason to exist if a single method could suit all those who are, generally speaking, qualified to receive initiation. Since this is not the case, each initiatory organization must have its own particular technique, and it will naturally only be able to admit those who are capable of conforming to it and deriving an effective benefit from it. This implies, with regard to qualifications, the application of a whole set of special rules, valid only for the organization in question, and in no way excluding, for those excluded by this, the possibility of finding an equivalent initiation elsewhere, provided they possess the general qualifications that are

absolutely essential in all cases. One of the clearest examples that can be given in this regard is the fact that it that there are forms of initiation that are exclusively male, while there are others where women can be admitted; one can therefore say that a certain qualification is required in one case and not in the other, and that this difference stems from the particular modes of initiation in question; we will return to this point later, as we have observed that this fact is generally very poorly understood in our time.

Therefore, since there is a traditional social organization, even in the external order, each person, being in the place that corresponds to their individual nature, should thereby be able to find more easily, if they are qualified, the mode of initiation that corresponds to their abilities. Thus, if one considers the organization of castes from this perspective, the initiation of the Kshatriyas cannot be identical to that of the Brahmins, and so on; And, more specifically, a certain form of initiation can be directly linked to the practice of a particular trade, as we have explained elsewhere. This can only have its full value if the trade practiced by each individual is indeed the one for which they are destined by the aptitudes inherent in their very nature, such that these aptitudes will simultaneously form an integral part of the special qualifications required for the corresponding form of initiation.

On the contrary, where nothing is organized according to traditional and normal rules, as is the case in the modern Western world, the result is a confusion that extends to all areas, inevitably leading to multiple complications and difficulties in precisely determining initiatory qualifications, since the individual's place in society then bears only a very distant relation to their nature, and often only the most external and least important aspects of it are taken into consideration—that is, those which have no real value whatsoever, even secondary, from an initiatory point of view. Another cause of difficulty, which is added to this one and is, moreover, to a certain extent linked to it, is the neglect of traditional sciences: the data from some of them can provide the means of recognizing the true nature of an individual, and when they are lacking, it is never possible, by any other means whatsoever, to

completely and perfectly compensate for them; whatever is done in this regard, there will always be a greater or lesser degree of "empiricism" which can give rise to many errors. This is one of the main reasons for the degeneration of certain initiatory organizations: the admission of unqualified members, whether through sheer ignorance of the rules that should eliminate them, or through the impossibility of applying them reliably, is indeed one of the factors that contributes most to this degeneration, and can even, if it becomes widespread, ultimately lead to the complete ruin of such an organization.

Before moving on to the second part of this study, in which we will place greater emphasis on the true significance that should be attributed to secondary qualifications, there is one more point to which we must draw attention: in addition to the qualifications required for initiation into the rite, which are those we are considering here, there may also be other, more specific qualifications required only to fulfill a particular function within an initiatory organization. These are two things that it is important never to confuse, and this distinction corresponds to the one we indicated in our last article concerning the initiatory hierarchy; it will therefore suffice, to understand the reason for this, to refer to what we said then; and we will only add that the aptitude to receive initiation, even up to the highest degree, does not necessarily imply the aptitude to exercise any function whatsoever, even the simplest of all. It must also be clearly understood that the function, whatever it may be, is never more than an accidental and contingent character; what alone is truly essential is the initiation itself with its degrees, since it is this that effectively influences the real state of being, while the function cannot in any way modify it or add anything to it.

(*to be continued*)

SYMBOLIC FLOWERS

The use of flowers in symbolism is, as is well known, very widespread and found in most traditions; it is also very complex, and our intention here can only be to indicate some of its most general meanings. It is evident, in fact, that depending on which flower is chosen as a symbol, the meaning must vary, at least in its secondary modalities, and also that, as is generally the case in symbolism, each flower can itself have a plurality of meanings, moreover linked to one another by certain correspondences.

One of the principal meanings relates to the feminine or passive principle of manifestation, that is to say, to Prakriti, the Universal Substance; and, in this respect, the flower is equivalent to a number of other symbols, among which one of the most important is the cup. Like the flower, in fact, the flower evokes by its very form the idea of a "receptacle," which is what Prakriti is for the influences emanating from Purusha, and we also commonly speak of the "calyx" of a flower. Furthermore, the blossoming of this same flower simultaneously represents the development of manifestation itself, considered as a product of Prakriti; and this double meaning is particularly clear in a case like that of the lotus, which in the East is the symbolic flower par excellence, and which has the special characteristic of blooming on the surface of water, which, as we have explained elsewhere, always represents the domain of a certain state of manifestation, or the plane of reflection of the "Celestial Ray" that expresses the influence of Purusha at work on this domain to realize the possibilities potentially contained within it, enveloped in the primordial undifferentiation of Prakriti[1].

The connection we have just indicated with the cup naturally brings to mind the symbolism of the Grail in Western traditions; and it is precisely on this subject that a remark of great interest should be made. It is known that, among the various other objects that legend associates with the Grail, there is notably a lance, which, in the Christian adaptation, is

1 See *The Symbolism of the Cross*, Ch.XXIV

none other than the lance of the centurion Longinus, through which the wound was opened in Christ's side from which flowed the blood and water that Joseph of Arimathea collected in the cup of the Last Supper; but it is nonetheless true that this lance, or one of its equivalents, already existed, as a symbol somewhat complementary to the cup, in traditions predating Christianity[2]. The spear, when placed vertically, is one of the figures of the "Axis of the World," which is identified with the "Celestial Ray" we mentioned earlier; and we can also recall, in this regard, the frequent assimilation of the solar ray to weapons such as the spear or the arrow, which we will not dwell on further here. On the other hand, in some representations, drops of blood fall from the spear itself into the cup; now, these drops of blood are, in their primary meaning, nothing other than the image of the influences emanating from Purusha, which also evokes the Vedic symbolism of Purusha's sacrifice at the origin of manifestation[3]; and this will bring us directly back to the question of floral symbolism, from which we have only strayed in appearance with these considerations. In the myth of Adonis (whose name, incidentally, means "the Lord"), when the hero is mortally wounded by the tusk of a boar, which here plays the same role as the spear[4], his blood, spilling onto the ground, gives birth to a flower; and one could doubtless easily find other similar examples. This is also found in Christian symbolism: thus, M. Charbonneau-Lassay pointed out "a wafer iron from the 12th century where the blood from the wounds of the Crucified is seen falling in droplets that transform into roses, and the 13th-century stained-glass window of Angers Cathedral where the divine blood, flowing in streams, also blossoms in the form of roses"[5]. The rose is, in fact, along with the lily, one of the most common equivalents of what the lotus is in the East; here. It also seems that the symbolism of the flower is

2 cf. The King of the World, p. 51. One could relate, among the different cases where the spear is used as a symbol, curious similarities even in points of detail: thus, among the Greeks, the spear of Achilles was believed to heal the wounds it had caused; medieval legend attributes the same power to the spear of the Passion.

3 One could also, in certain respects, draw a parallel here with the well-known symbolism of the pelican.

4 Much could be said about the symbolism of the boar and its polar character, which also relates it precisely to the "World Axis."

5 Regnabit, January 1925. We should also mention, as relating to a connected symbolism, the representation of the five wounds of Christ by five roses, one placed at the center of the cross and the other four between its arms, a combination which also constitutes one of the principal Rosicrucian symbols.

related solely to the production of manifestation[6], and that Prakriti is rather represented by the very earth that blood vivifies; but there are also cases where it seems to be otherwise. In the same article we have just cited, M. Charbonneau-Lassay reproduces a design embroidered on an altarpiece from the Abbey of Fontevraud, dating from the first half of the 16th century and now kept in the Naples Museum, where a rose is seen placed at the foot of a vertically erect lance, along which drops of blood are falling. This rose appears there associated with the lance exactly as the cup is elsewhere, and it seems to collect the drops of blood rather than originating from the transformation of one of them; Moreover, it is evident that the two meanings are not at all opposed, but rather complement each other, for these drops, falling upon the rose, also enliven it and cause it to bloom; and it goes without saying that this symbolic role of blood has, in all cases, its basis in its direct relationship with the vital principle, transposed here into the cosmic order. This rain of blood is also equivalent to the "celestial dew" which, according to Kabbalistic doctrine, emanates from the "Tree of Life," another figure of the "Axis of the World," and whose life-giving influence is primarily linked to the ideas of regeneration and resurrection, clearly connected to the Christian idea of Redemption; and this same dew also plays an important role in alchemical and Rosicrucian symbolism[7].

When the flower is considered to represent the development of manifestation, there is also an equivalence between it and other symbols, among which the wheel deserves special mention. This wheel is found almost everywhere, with varying numbers of spokes depending on the depiction, but each always possesses a particular symbolic value in itself. The most common types are the six- and eight-spoked wheels; the Celtic "wheel," which persisted throughout almost the entire Western Middle Ages, appears in both of these forms. These same figures, and especially the second, are very frequently found in Eastern countries, notably in Chaldea and Assyria, in India, and in

6 It must be clearly understood, so that this interpretation cannot give rise to any objection, that there is a very close relationship between "Creation" and "Redemption," which are, in short, only two aspects of the operation of the Divine Word.

7 Cf. The King of the World, p. 31. The similarity that exists between the name of dew (ros) and that of rose (rosa) cannot fail to be noticed by those who know how frequent the use of a certain phonetic symbolism is.

Tibet. Now, the wheel is always, first and foremost, a symbol of the World; in the symbolic language of the Hindu tradition, one constantly speaks of the "wheel of things" or the "wheel of life," which clearly corresponds to this meaning; and allusions to the "cosmic wheel" are no less frequent in the Far Eastern tradition. This is sufficient to establish The close relationship of these figures with symbolic flowers, whose blossoming is also a radiance around the center, is evident, for they too are "centered" figures; and it is known that, in the Hindu tradition, the World is sometimes represented as a lotus in the center of which rises Meru, the "polar mountain." Moreover, there are clear correspondences, further reinforcing this equivalence, between the number of petals on some of these flowers and the number of spokes on the wheel: thus, the lily has six petals, and the lotus, in its most common representations, has eight, so that they correspond respectively to the six- and eight-spoked wheels we have just discussed[8]. As for the rose, it is depicted with a variable number of petals; we will only note in this regard that, generally speaking, the numbers five and six relate respectively to the "microcosm" and the "macrocosm"; Furthermore, in alchemical symbolism, the five-petaled rose, placed at the center of the cross representing the quaternary of elements, is also, as we have already noted here in another study, the symbol of the "quintessence," which, moreover, plays a role analogous to that of Prakriti in relation to corporeal manifestation[9]. Finally, we will also mention the kinship of the six-petaled roses and the six-spoked wheel with certain other equally widespread symbols, such as that of the "Chi-Rho," which we intend to discuss on another occasion[10]. For now, it will suffice to have showed the two most important similarities of the floral symbols, with the cup insofar as they relate to Prakriti, and with the wheel insofar as they

8 We have noted, as a very clear example of such an equivalence in the Middle Ages, the eight-spoked wheel and an eight-petaled flower depicted opposite each other on the same sculpted stone, embedded in the facade of the old church of Saint-Maxime in Chinon, and which most likely dates from the Carolingian period. The wheel is, moreover, very often found depicted on Romanesque churches, and the Gothic rose window itself, whose name likens it to floral symbols, seems to be derived from it, so that it would thus be linked, by an unbroken lineage, to the ancient Celtic wheel.

9 The Hindu theory of the five elements (August-September 1935 issue).

10 Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay noted the association of the rose itself with the Chi-Rho monogram (Regnabit, March 1926 issue); in a figure of this kind that he reproduced from a Merovingian brick, the central rose has six petals which are oriented along the branches of the Chi-Rho; moreover, the latter is enclosed in a circle, which makes its identity with the six-spoked wheel appear as clearly as possible.

relate to cosmic manifestation, the relationship of these two meanings being, moreover, in short, a relationship of principle to consequence, since Prakriti is the very root of all manifestation.

May 1936

ON INITIATIC QUALIFICATIONS

Continued[1]

After the general considerations we presented in the first part of this study, we would need, in order to be more precise, to give well-defined examples of the conditions required for access to this or that initiatory form, and to show in each case their true meaning; but such an exposition, when addressed to Westerners, is rendered very difficult by the fact that they know only an extremely limited number of these initiatory forms, and that references to all the others would risk remaining entirely incomprehensible. Moreover, everything that survives in the West of the ancient organizations of this kind is greatly diminished in every respect, and this is easy to see especially with regard to the very question at hand: if certain qualifications are still required there, it is more by force of habit than by any understanding of their purpose; And, under these circumstances, it is not surprising that members of these organizations sometimes protest against the continued use of these qualifications, seeing in their ignorance only a kind of historical relic, a remnant of a long-vanished state of affairs, in short, a pure and simple "anachronism." However, since one is obliged to take as a starting point what is most readily available, this very fact can provide an opportunity for some observations which, despite everything, are not without interest, and which, although appearing to us primarily as simple illustrations, are nonetheless capable of giving rise to reflections of a broader application than might initially seem. As we have already stated on several occasions, in the Western world, only two initiatory organizations can claim a genuine traditional lineage (without which, let us reiterate, there can only be talk of "pseudo-initiation"): the Guilds and Freemasonry. These are initiatory forms based

1 See No. 196, April 1936, pp. 119 et seq.

essentially on the practice of a craft and, consequently, characterized by specific symbolic and ritual methods directly related to that craft itself. However, a distinction must be made here: in the Guilds, the original link with the craft has always been maintained, whereas in Freemasonry, it has effectively disappeared. Hence, in the latter case, the danger of a more complete misunderstanding of the necessity of certain conditions, which are nevertheless inherent to the very initiatory form in question. Indeed, in the other case, it is evident that at least the necessary conditions for the profession to be practiced effectively, and even for it to be practiced as adequately as possible, can never be lost sight of, even if one considers nothing more than that—that is, if one takes into account only its external rationale and forgets its deeper, truly initiatory rationale. On the contrary, where this deeper rationale is no less forgotten, and where the external rationale itself no longer exists, it is quite natural, in short (which, of course, does not mean legitimate), to come to think that maintaining such conditions is in no way necessary, and to regard them only as troublesome, even unjust, restrictions (this is a consideration much abused in our time, a consequence of the destructive "egalitarianism" of the notion of the "elite"), imposed on a recruitment process that the mania for "proselytism" and the democratic superstition of "the large number," traits so characteristic of the modern Western mind, would like to make as broad as possible, which is indeed one of the most certain and irremediable causes of degeneration for an initiatory organization.

Ultimately, what is forgotten in such cases is quite simply this: if the initiatory ritual takes the craft as its "support," such that it is, so to speak, derived from it by an appropriate transposition (and no doubt, originally, things should be considered in the opposite direction, since the craft truly represents only a contingent application of the principles to which initiation directly relates), the accomplishment of this ritual, in order to be truly and fully valid, will require conditions among which will be those of the very practice of the craft, the same transposition applying there as well, and this by virtue of the correspondences that exist between the different modalities of being; and, by this, it clearly appears that, as we indicated previously, whoever

is qualified for initiation, in a general way, is not thereby indifferently qualified for any initiatory form whatsoever. We must add that the ignorance of this fundamental point, leading to the entirely profane reduction of qualifications to mere corporate rules, appears, at least as far as Freemasonry is concerned, to be quite closely linked to a misunderstanding of the true meaning of the word “operative”; but, as a more complete explanation on this subject would take us too far afield, and since these considerations also involve matters of a very general initiatory scope, we prefer to reserve them for the moment, and we intend to make them the subject of a separate article later.

Thus, if Masonic initiation excludes, in particular, women (which, as we have already said, in no way means that they are incapable of any initiation), and also men who suffer from certain infirmities, it is not simply because, in the past, those who were admitted had to be able to carry burdens or climb scaffolding, as some assert with disconcerting naiveté; it is because, for those who are thus excluded, Masonic initiation as such cannot be valid, so that its effects would be diminished by a lack of qualification. We can say first of all, in this regard, that the connection with the trade, if it has ceased to exist with regard to the external exercise of the latter, nevertheless subsists in another more essential way, insofar as it necessarily remains inscribed in the very form of this initiation; if it were to be eliminated from it, it would no longer be Masonic initiation, but something else entirely different; and, as it would moreover be impossible to legitimately substitute another traditional lineage for the one which exists in fact, there would then not even really be any initiation. This is why, where there remains at least, if not a more effective understanding, a certain more or less obscure awareness of the intrinsic value of ritual forms, the conditions we are discussing here persist in considering them as integral parts of the landmarks (the English term, in this “technical” sense, has no exact equivalent in French), which cannot be modified under any circumstances, and whose suppression or neglect would risk leading to a true initiatory nullity.

Now, there is something more: if we closely examine the list of bodily

defects that are considered as obstacles to initiation, we will find that some of them do not seem very serious outwardly, and in any case, are not such as to really prevent a man from practicing the trade of builder; therefore, there is still only a partial explanation, although accurate to the extent that it is applicable, and that, in addition to the conditions required by the trade, initiation requires others which have nothing to do with it, but which are solely related to the modalities of the ritual work, considered moreover not only in its "materiality", so to speak, but above all as having to produce effective results for the being who accomplishes it. This will become all the more apparent when, among the various formulations of the landmarks (for, although not written down in principle, they have nevertheless often been the subject of more or less detailed enumerations), one refers to the most enduring, that is to say, those which date back to a time when the things in question were still known, and even, for some at least, known in a way that was not merely theoretical or "speculative," but truly "operative," in the true sense to which we alluded earlier. By making this examination, one may even notice something that, certainly, would seem quite extraordinary to some today if they were capable of grasping it: namely, that the impediments to initiation in Freemasonry coincide almost entirely with what are, in the Catholic Church, the impediments to ordination.

This last point is one of those which, to be properly understood, requires some commentary, for one might, at first glance, be tempted to suppose that there is a certain confusion here between things of a different order, especially since we have often insisted on the essential distinction that exists between the two initiatory and religious domains, and, consequently, between the rites that relate respectively to each. However, it doesn't take much thought to understand that there must be general laws governing the performance of rites, whatever their nature, since it is always, in essence, a matter of implementing certain spiritual influences, even though the goal naturally differs from case to case. On the other hand, one could also object that, in the case of ordination, it is properly a question of the aptitude to fulfill certain functions, whereas, with regard to initiation, we have previously emphasized that the qualifications required to receive it are distinct from those that may

be necessary to also perform a function in an initiatory organization (a function primarily concerning the transmission of spiritual influence); and it is true that it is not from this perspective of functions that one must approach the analogy for it to be truly applicable. What must be considered is that, in a religious organization like Catholicism, only the priest actively performs the rites, while laypeople participate only in a "receptive" mode; on the other hand, activity within the ritual order always constitutes, without exception, an essential element of any initiatory method, such that this method necessarily implies the possibility of exercising such activity. Ultimately, then, it is this active performance of the rites that requires, beyond purely intellectual qualifications, certain secondary qualifications, which vary partly according to the specific character these rites assume in a given initiatory form, but among which the absence of certain bodily defects always plays an important role, either because these defects directly hinder the performance of the rites, or because they are the outward sign of corresponding defects in the subtle elements of being. This is primarily what we wanted to emphasize in this part of our presentation; and, fundamentally, what seems to relate more specifically to a particular case, that of Masonic initiation, has been for us only the most convenient way to introduce these considerations, which we will still have to make more precise with the help of some specific examples of impediments due to bodily defects or to psychic defects manifested appreciably by these.

(*to be continued*)

THE ENIGMA OF MARTINES DE PASQUALLY

The history of initiatory organizations is often very difficult to clarify, and this is easily understood by the very nature of the subject, for there are too many elements that necessarily escape the means of investigation available to ordinary historians. To realize this, one need not even go back to very remote periods; it suffices to consider the 18th century, where, still coexisting with the manifestations of the modern spirit in its most profane and anti-traditional aspects, we see what appear to be the last vestiges of various initiatory currents that once existed in the Western world, and during which appear figures who are no less enigmatic than the organizations to which they belonged or which they inspired. One of these figures is Martines de Pasqually; And, regarding the works published in recent years on him and his Order of the Elus Coens by Messrs. R. Le Forestier and P. Vulliaud, we have already had occasion to note how many points of his biography remained obscure despite all the documents brought to light[1]. Mr. Girard van Rijnberk has just published another book on this subject[2], which also contains interesting and largely unpublished documentation; But must we say that, despite this, this book perhaps raises even more questions than it answers?[3]

The author first notes the uncertainty surrounding the very name of Martines, and he lists the many variants found in the writings where it is mentioned; it is true that these differences should not be given undue importance, since, in the 18th century, the spelling of proper names was hardly respected, but he adds: as for the man himself, who, better than

1 A new forum on the Order of the Elus Coens (December 1929 issue); Regarding the Lyon Rosicrucians (January 1930 issue)

2 *Un thaumaturge au XVIIIe siècle Martines de Pasqually, sa vie, son cauere, son Ordre* (Félix Alcan, Paris)

3 1. We should mention in passing a small error by Mr. van Rijnberk. Speaking of his predecessors, he attributes to Mr. René Philipon the historical notices signed "A Knight of the Crescent Rose," which serve as prefaces to the editions of Martines de Pasqually's "Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings" and Franz von Baader's "Secret Teachings of Martines de Pasqually", published in the Rosicrucian Library. Surprised by this assertion, we asked Mr. Philipon himself; he replied that he had only translated von Baader's pamphlet, and that, as we suspected, the two notices in question are actually by Albéric Thomas.

anyone else, should have known the exact spelling of his own name or his pseudonym as head of initiation, he always signed: Don Martines de Pasqually (only once de Pas-qually de La Tour). In the only authentic document known to us, the baptismal certificate of his son, his name is thus formulated as Jaques Delivon Joacin Latour de La Case, don Martinets de Pasqually It is inaccurate to claim that the document in question, published by Papus[4], is the only known authentic document, since two others, which undoubtedly escaped Mr. van Rijnberk's attention, have been published here[5] Martines' marriage certificate and the certificate of Catholicism issued to him upon his departure for Saint-Domingue. The first bears the name Jaque Delyoron Joachin Latour De la Case Martines Depasqually, legitimate son of the late Mr. Delatour de la Case and Lady Suzanne Dumas de Rainau[6]; and the second simply bears the name 'Jacques Pasqually de Latour'; as for Martines' own signature, it is, on the first, Don Martines Depasqually, and, on the second, Depasqually de la Tour. The fact that his father, in the marriage certificate, is named simply Delatour de la Case (as is also the case for his son in the baptismal certificate, although a marginal note calls him de Pasqually, no doubt because this name was more common), seems to support what Mr. van Rijnberk writes next. One would be tempted to deduce from this that his real name was de La Case, or de Las Cases, and that Martines de Pasqually was only a hieronym,
However, this name de La Case or de Las Cases, which may be a Frenchified form of the Spanish name Las Casas, raises further questions; And, first of all, it must be noted that the second successor of Martines as Grand Sovereign of the Order of the Elus Coens (the first having been Caignet de Lestère) was named Sebastian de Las Casas. Was there some kinship between him and Martines? The thing is not impossible: he was from Saint-Domingue, and Martines had gone to that island to collect an inheritance, which may suggest that part of his family had settled there[7]. But there is something else much stranger:

4 *Martines de Pasqually, pp. 10-11-*

5 The marriage of Martines de Pasqually (issue of January 1930)

6 .It was noted that there is such a Delyoron, whereas the baptismal certificate bears the name Delivon (or perhaps Delivron): this name, being inserted between two given names, does not appear to be a family name. Furthermore, it hardly needs to be recalled that the separation of particles (which do not necessarily constitute a sign of nobility) was then entirely optional

7 It is true that there were also relatives of his wife in Saint-Domingue, so that it is possible that the in-

L.-Cl. de Saint-Martin, in his Crocodile, features a Spanish Jew named Eleazar, to whom he clearly attributes many traits of his former master Martines; or here is how this Eléazar explains the reasons why he had been forced to leave Spain and take refuge in France: “I had in Madrid a Christian friend, belonging to the Las-Casas family, to whom I owe, albeit indirectly, the greatest debts. After some prosperity in business, he was suddenly ruined utterly by a fraudulent bankruptcy. I immediately went to his house to share in his sorrow and offer him the few resources my modest fortune allowed me to have; but these resources being too meager to put him on par with his affairs, I yielded to the friendship I felt for him and allowed myself to be drawn into this movement, even resorting to certain special means that helped me soon uncover the fraud of his plunderers and even the hidden place where they had deposited the riches they had taken from him. By these same means, I made it easy for him to recover all his treasures and have them returned to him, without even those who had stolen them being able to suspect anyone of having deprived them in turn I was wrong, no doubt, to use these means for such an object, since they should only be applied to the administration of things unrelated to worldly riches; and so I was punished for it. My friend, instructed in a timid and suspicious faith, suspected sorcery in what I had just done for him; and his pious zeal prevailing over his gratitude, just as my self-serving zeal had prevailed over my duty, he denounced me to his church, both as a sorcerer and as a Jew. The inquisitors were immediately informed; I was condemned to be burned at the stake, even before being arrested, but at the very moment they were about to prosecute me, I was warned by that same private voice of the fate that threatened me; and without delay, I took refuge in your homeland”[8].

Undoubtedly, there are many purely fantastical elements in The Crocodile, where it would be very difficult to see precise allusions to real events and people; it is nonetheless highly improbable that the name of Las Casas appears there by mere chance. This is why we thought it worthwhile to reproduce the passage in its entirety, despite its length:

heritance came from that side however, the letter published by Papus (Martines de Pasqually, p. 58), without being perfectly clear, is rather in favor of the other hypothesis, for it does not appear that his two half-brothers who were in Saint-Domingue had any interest in the donation that had been made to him.

8 The Crocodile, song 12

what exactly could there be between the Jew Eleazar, who so closely resembles Martines in the powers and doctrine attributed to him, and the Las Casas family, and what could be the nature of the great obligations he owed them? For the moment, we are only formulating these questions, without claiming to offer any answer; we shall see if what follows allows us to consider a more or less plausible one[9].

Let us turn to other points in Martines' biography, which hold no fewer surprises: Mr. van Rijnberk says that the year and place of his birth are completely unknown; but he points out that Willermoz wrote to Baron von Türkheim that Martines died at an advanced age; and he adds: At the time Willermoz wrote this sentence, he himself was 91 years old. As men have the general tendency to evaluate the age of other mortals according to a measure that increases with their own years, there should be no doubt that the advanced age attributed to Martines by the nonagenarian Willermoz must have been no less than 70. As Martines died in 1774, he must have been born at most in the first ten years of the 18th century. He therefore leans towards the hypothesis of Gustave Bord, who places Martines around 1710 or 1715; But, even taking the first date, that would make him die at 64, which, to tell the truth, is still not an advanced age, especially compared to Willermoz's... And then, unfortunately, one of the documents of which Mr. van Rijnberk does not seem to have been aware, gives a formal rebuttal to this hypothesis: the certificate of Catholicism was issued in 1772 to Mr. Jacques Pasqually de Latour, squire, born in Grenoble, aged 45; from this we would have to conclude that he was born around 1727; and, if he died in Saint-Domingue two years later, in 1774, he only reached the very young age of 47!

This same document also confirms that, as many had already said, but contrary to the opinion of Mr. van Rijnberk who refuses to admit it, Martines was born in Grenoble. This does not, of course, preclude him from having been of Spanish origin, since, among all the origins that have been attributed to him, it is in favor of this one that there seems to

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9 Yet another bizarre connection: Saint-Martin represents Las Casas, Pami du Julf Kléazar, as having been spoliated of his property; Martines, in the letter we have already mentioned, says, "I have been given in that country (that is to say, in Saint-Domingue) a donation of a great property which I am going to take back from the hands of a man who is unjustly holding it," and it turns out that this letter was written, at Martines's dictation, by Saint-Martin himself.

be the most evidence, including, of course, the very name of Las Casas; But then we would have to admit that his father was already established in France before his birth, and that perhaps he even married in France. This is further confirmed by Martines' marriage certificate, since his mother's name, as it appears there, Dame Suzanne Dumas de Rainau, can hardly be anything other than a French name, while Delatour de la Case's name may simply have been Gallicized. Ultimately, the only truly serious reason to doubt that Martines was born in France (since we can hardly take into consideration the contradictory assertions of various people, which are all mere suppositions), lies in the linguistic peculiarities found in his writings; but, in fact, this can very well be explained partly by the education he received from a Spanish father, and partly also by the stays he probably made in various countries. We will return to this last point later.

By a rather curious coincidence, which hardly simplifies matters, it seems established that there was in Grenoble, at the same time, a family whose name was indeed Pascalis; but Martines, judging by the names appearing on the documents concerning him, must have been completely unrelated to him. Perhaps it was to this family that the coachbuilder Martin Pascalis belonged, who is also called Martin Pascal or even Pascal Martin (for, on this point too, we are not entirely certain), if indeed he is truly a distinct person, and if it is not simply Martines himself who, at some point, must have taken up this trade to earn a living, for, apparently, his financial situation was never very prosperous; this, too, seems never to have been clarified in a satisfactory way

On the other hand, many have thought that Martines was Jewish; he certainly was not Jewish by religion, since it is abundantly proven that he was Catholic; but it is true that, as Mr. van Rijnberk says, this in no way prejudges the question of race. There are indeed, in Martines' life, some indications that might suggest he was of Jewish origin, but these are by no means decisive, and can just as easily be explained by affinities of a completely different kind than a shared race. Franz von Baader says that Martines was both Jewish and Christian; does this not recall the relationship between the Jew Eleazar and the Christian family of Las Casas? But the very fact of presenting Eleazar as a Spanish Jew may very well be an allusion, not to Martines' personal origin, but to

the origin of his doctrine, in which, indeed, Jewish elements undeniably predominate

In any case, there still remain, in Martines' biography, a number of inconsistencies and contradictions, among which the most striking is undoubtedly that which relates to his age; but perhaps Mr. van Rijnberk is unwittingly indicating the solution by suggesting that 'Martines de Pasqually' was a 'hieronym' that is to say, an initiatory name. Indeed, why should this same hieronym not have served, as has happened in other similar cases, for several distinguished individuals? And who knows if the 'great obligations' that the character whom Saint-Martin calls the Jew Eleazar had to the Las Casas family were not due to the fact that the latter had provided, in one way or another, a kind of "cover" for his initiatory activity? It would undoubtedly be unwise to try to be more specific; however, we shall see whether what can be known about the origin of Martines' beliefs might not shed some further light on the matter.

(*To be continued*)

June 1936

ON INITIATIC QUALIFICATIONS

Continued[1]

If we consider infirmities or simple bodily defects as outward signs of certain imperfections of a psychological nature, it will be necessary to distinguish between defects that a person possesses from birth, or that develop naturally within them during their lifetime as consequences of a certain predisposition, and those that are simply the result of some accident. It is evident, in fact, that the former reflect something that can be regarded as more strictly inherent to the very nature of the being, and which, consequently, is more serious from our point of view, although, moreover, since nothing can happen to a being that does not truly correspond to some more or less essential element of its nature, even infirmities of apparently accidental origin cannot be regarded as entirely irrelevant in this respect. On the other hand, if we consider these same defects as direct obstacles to the performance of rites or to their effective action on the being, the distinction we have just indicated no longer needs to be made. But it must be clearly understood that certain defects, while not constituting such obstacles, are nonetheless, for the first reason, impediments to initiation, and sometimes even impediments of a more absolute nature, for they express an inner "deficiency" rendering the individual unfit for any initiation, whereas there may be infirmities that merely hinder the effectiveness of the "technical" methods specific to one or another form of initiation.

Some may be surprised that we say that accidental infirmities also have a correspondence in the very nature of the being afflicted by them; we will refer them to the considerations we have previously set forth concerning the relationship of the individual to the environment in

1 See No. 196, April, and 197, May

which they manifest[1], for this is, in essence, a direct consequence. As we said then, all relations between beings manifested in the same world, or, what amounts to the same thing, all their reciprocal actions and reactions, can only be real if they are the expression of something that belongs to the nature of each of these beings. In other words, everything that a being undergoes, as well as everything that it does, constituting a "modification" of itself, must necessarily correspond to one of the possibilities that are implied in its nature, so that there can be nothing that is purely accidental, if we understand this word in the sense of "extrinsic" as is commonly done. The whole difference here is therefore only a difference of degree: there are modifications that represent something more important or deeper than others; there are, therefore, in a sense, hierarchical values to be observed in this respect among the various possibilities of the individual domain. But, strictly speaking, nothing is indifferent or devoid of meaning, because, fundamentally, a being can only receive from the outside simple "opportunities" for the realization, in manifested mode, of the potentialities that it first carries within itself. It may also seem strange to those who rely on appearances that certain infirmities, seemingly minor from an outward standpoint, have always and everywhere been considered an impediment to initiation; a typical example of this is stuttering. In reality, a little reflection is enough to realize that, in this case, one finds precisely both of the reasons we have mentioned; and indeed, first of all, there is the fact that the ritual "technique" almost always involves the pronunciation of certain verbal formulas, a pronunciation which must naturally be correct above all else to be valid, something that stuttering prevents those afflicted with it from achieving. On the other hand, such an infirmity is the manifest sign of a certain "arrhythmia" of being, if one may use that word; Moreover, the two things are closely linked here, for the very use of the formulas to which we have just alluded is simply one application of the "science of rhythm" to the initiatory method, so that the inability to pronounce them correctly ultimately depends on the internal "derhythmia" of the individual.

This "derhythmia" is itself only a particular case of disharmony or

1 The Being and the Milieu, December 1933 issue.

imbalance in the constitution of the individual; and it can be said, generally speaking, that all bodily anomalies that are marks of a more or less pronounced imbalance, while not necessarily always absolute impediments (for there are obviously many degrees to consider), are at the very least unfavorable indicators in a candidate for initiation. It may well be that such anomalies, which are not strictly speaking infirmities, are not of a nature to prevent the performance of the ritual work, but that nevertheless, if they reach a degree of severity indicating a profound and irremediable imbalance, they alone suffice to definitively disqualify the candidate, in accordance with what we have already explained above. Such are, for example, noticeable asymmetries of the face or limbs; but, of course, if these were only very slight asymmetries, they could not even be considered truly an anomaly, because, in fact, there is probably no one who presents perfect bodily symmetry in every respect. This can also be interpreted as meaning that, in the current state of humanity at least, no individual is perfectly balanced in all respects; And, indeed, the realization of the perfect balance of individuality, implying the complete neutralization of all opposing tendencies acting within it, and thus fixation at its very center—the only point where these oppositions cease to manifest themselves—is equivalent, purely and simply, to the restoration of the "primordial state." We see, therefore, that nothing should be exaggerated, and that if there are individuals qualified for initiation, they are so despite a certain state of relative imbalance that is inevitable, but which initiation can and must mitigate if it produces an effective result, and even eliminate if it is carried to the degree that corresponds to the perfection of individual possibilities, that is to say, to the culmination of the "lesser mysteries."

We can also, on this occasion, make a rather curious observation: certain initiatory disqualifications, especially of the kind we just discussed, can simultaneously represent qualifications in the opposite direction, that is, with regard to "counter-initiation." One can get an idea of this if one notices, for example, the importance attributed to bodily asymmetries in certain descriptions of the Antichrist; even if these descriptions are primarily symbolic, they are nonetheless significant in this respect, since they essentially imply that these asymmetries are the visible marks

of the very nature of the being to whom they are attributed; and it is evident that the Antichrist must be considered as synthesizing within himself all powers of the "counter-initiation." This is easily understood, since counter-initiation, by its very definition, consequently leads to an increase in the imbalance of beings, the extreme of which is the "disintegration" to which we have already sometimes alluded, but this is not the place to dwell on it further, since, of course, it is not counter-initiation nor the mysteries of the "Dark Satellite" that we intend to discuss here.

We must also point out that there are certain flaws which, without being such as to prevent a virtual initiation, can prevent it from becoming effective; it goes without saying, moreover, that it is especially important to take into account the differences in methods that exist between the various initiatory forms; but, in all cases, there will be such considerations to take into account as soon as one intends to move from the "speculative" to the "operative." One of the most general cases, in this order, will be that of defects which, like certain deviations of the spine, impair the normal circulation of subtle currents in the organism; it is hardly necessary, in fact, to recall the important role that these currents play in most processes of realization, from their very beginning, and as long as individual possibilities are not exceeded. It should be added, to avoid any misunderstanding in this regard, that while the activation of these currents is consciously accomplished in certain methods, there are others where this is not the case, but where nevertheless this action is no less effective and is no less important. A thorough examination of certain ritualistic particularities, of certain "signs of recognition" for example (which are at the same time something quite different when one truly understands them), could provide very clear indications on this subject, although certainly unexpected for those not accustomed to considering things from this point of view, which is properly that of initiatory "technique." Comme il faut nous borner, nous nous contenterons de ces quelques exemples, peu nombreux sans doute, mais choisis à dessein parmi ceux qui correspondent aux cas les plus caractéristiques et les plus instructifs, de façon à faire comprendre le mieux possible ce dont ü s'agit

véritablement ; ü serait en somme peu utile, sinon tout à fait fastidieux, de les multiplier indéfiniment. Si nous avons tant insisté sur le côté corporel des qualifications initiatiques, c'est qu'il est certainement celui qui risque d'apparaître le moins clairement aux yeux e beaucoup, celui que nos contemporains sont généralement le plus disposés à méconnaître, donc celui sur lequel il y a d'autant plus Heu d'attirer spécialement leur attention, es aussi qu'il y avait là une occasion de montrer une fois de plus combien tout ce qui concerne l'initiation est loin des simp es théories plus ou moins vagues et nébuleuses que voudraient y voir tant de gens qui, par un effet trop commun de la confusion moderne, ont la prétention de parler de choses dont ils n'ont pas la moindre connaissance réelle, mais qu'ils n en croient que plus facilement pouvoir « reconstruire « au gré de leur imagination.

THE ENIGMA OF MARTINES DE PASQUALLY

Continued

In the same letter, dated July 1821, where Willermoz states that Martines died "advanced to old age," there is another noteworthy passage, according to which the initiation was transmitted to Martines by his own father: "In his ministry, he had succeeded his father, a learned, distinguished man, more prudent than his son, who had little fortune and resided in Spain. He had placed his still-young son, Martines, in the Walloon Guards, where he had a quarrel that led to a duel in which he killed his opponent; they had to flee quickly, and the father hastened to consecrate him as his successor before his departure. After a long absence, the father, sensing his end approaching, promptly summoned the son back and gave him the final ordinations." "To be honest, this story about the Walloon guards, for which it has been impossible to find any other confirmation, seems rather suspicious to us, especially if it were to imply, as Mr. van Rijnberk says, 'that Martines was born in Spain,' which is not entirely obvious; moreover, this is not a point on which Willcrmoz could have provided direct testimony, since he later states that he only met the son in 1767 in Paris, long after the father's death"[1]. Whatever the case may be regarding this secondary question, there remains the assertion that Martines received from his father not only initiation, but even the transmission of certain initiatory functions, since the word "ministry" can hardly be interpreted otherwise; and, in this regard, Mr. van Rijnberk points to a letter written in 1779 by the Freemason Falcke, in which we read the

1 This year 1767 is the very year of Martines' marriage: it is therefore very probable that the two brothers residing in Saint Domingue, for whom he would have come to Paris to solicit the cross of Saint Louis, are in reality none other than the two very rich brothers-in-law, who are mentioned, as we have already said, in the letter of April 17 and 30, 1772 cited by Papus (Martines de Pasqually, p. 58). This is also further confirmed by the fact that, in another letter of November 1, 1771, we find this sentence: "I inform you that I have finally obtained the Cross of Saint Louis from my brother-in-law" (ibid., p. 55): he had therefore not, at least for one of them, obtained it immediately in 1767, contrary to what Willermoz writes, whose memory may well have misled him on this point; it is surprising that Mr. van Rijnberk did not think to make these connections, which seem to us to sufficiently elucidate this question, which is, moreover, quite incidental.

following: “Martinez Pasqualis, a Spaniard, claims to possess secret knowledge as an inheritance from his family, who live in Spain and have thus possessed it for three hundred years; they supposedly acquired it from the Inquisition, with which his ancestors served.” There is a strong implausibility here, for it is truly difficult to see what initiatory repository the Inquisition could ever have possessed and communicated; but let us recall that, in the passage from The Crocodile that we have reproduced, it is Las Casas who denounces his friend, the Jew Eleazar, to the Inquisition, precisely because of the latter’s secret knowledge; Wouldn’t one say that something has been deliberately obscured here[2]?

Now, one might certainly ask: when Martines, or the person Vülermoz knew by that name from 1767 onwards, speaks of his father, should we take this literally, or is he referring instead solely to his “spiritual father,” whoever that may have been? Indeed, one can very well speak of an initiatory “filiation,” and it is clear that this does not necessarily coincide with filiation in the ordinary sense of the word; one might even perhaps evoke, here again, the duality of Las Casas and the Jew Eleazar...
It must be said, however, that a hereditary initiatory transmission, even involving the exercise of a certain function, would not represent a completely exceptional case; but, in the absence of sufficient data, it is very difficult to decide whether this was indeed the case of Martines. At most, one could find an indication in favor of the affirmative in certain particularities concerning Martines’ succession: he gave his eldest son, immediately after his baptism, the first consecration in the hierarchy of the Elus Coens, which may suggest that he intended him to become his successor. This son disappeared at the time of the Revolution, and Willermoz says he could not find out what became of him; as for the second son, even more singularly, we know the date of his birth, but he was never mentioned again thereafter. In any case, when Martines died in 1774, the eldest son was certainly alive; However, it was not he who succeeded him as “Grand Sovereign,” but Caignet de Lestère, and then, when the latter died in turn in 1778, Sébastien de Las Casas;

2 . Let us also note a peculiarity, from which we do not, moreover, intend to draw any conclusion: Falcke Paris in the presence of Martines, who nevertheless must have been dead for five years already.

what, under these conditions, becomes of the idea of a hereditary transmission? The fact that the son was too young to be able to fulfill these functions (he was only six years old) cannot, moreover, be invoked, for Martines could very well have appointed a substitute until he came of age, and we do not see that this was ever discussed. Yet, what is even more curious, it seems on the other hand that there was some kinship between Martines and his two successors: indeed, he speaks in a letter of "his cousin Cagnet," who, taking into account the usual spelling variations of the time, must be the same as Caignet de Lestère[3]; And, as for Sebastian de Las Casas, we have already indicated that such a relationship was suggested by his very name; but, in any case, this transmission to more or less distant relatives, when there was a direct heir, can hardly be assimilated to "dynastic succession". which Mr. van Rijnberk speaks of, and to which he even attributes "a certain esoteric importance" that we cannot quite explain.

Whether Martines was initiated by his father or someone else is not the essential question, for it sheds little light on what truly matters: to which tradition did this initiation belong? What might perhaps provide some clearer indications on this subject are the journeys that Martines probably undertook before the beginning of his initiatory activity in France; unfortunately, on this point as well, we have only very vague and dubious information, and even the assertion that he went to the East means nothing well defined, especially since, very often, in such cases, these are merely legendary or rather symbolic journeys. On this subject, Mr. van Rijnberk believes he can cite a passage from the Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings where Martines seems to say that he went to China, whereas there is nothing of the sort for much closer countries; but this journey, if it actually took place, is perhaps the least interesting of all from our current perspective, because it is clear that neither in Martines' teachings nor in his "ritual operations" is there anything that bears the slightest direct relation to the Far Eastern tradition. There is, however, in a letter from Martines, this rather remarkable sentence: "My state and my quality as a true man have always kept me in the position

3 "I inform you that I have delivered the founding letters patent to my cousin Cagust." (letter of November 1, 1771, cited by Papus, Martines de Pasqually, p. 16).

I am in"[4]; it seems that this expression "true man," which is specifically Taoist, has never been noted before, but which is undoubtedly the only one of its kind that can be found in Martines[5].

In any case, if Martines was born around 1727, his travels could not have lasted for very many years, even if there is no reason to deduct the time of his supposed time with the Walloon Guards, since his known initiatory activity begins in 1754, and at that date he would have been only 27 years old[6]. It is readily accepted that he must have gone to Spain, especially if his family origins linked him there; and perhaps also to Italy; this is very plausible indeed, and he could have brought back from a stay in these two countries some of the most striking peculiarities of his language; but, apart from the explanation of this purely external detail, it does not advance much, for, at that time, what could possibly have remained in these countries from an initiatory point of view? We must certainly look elsewhere, and, in our opinion, the most accurate indication is that given by this passage from a note by Prince Christian of Hesse-Darmstadt: "Pasquali claimed that his knowledge came from the East, but it is to be presumed that he received it from Africa," by which we must understand, in all probability, the Sephardic Jews established in North Africa since their expulsion from Spain[7]. This can indeed explain many things: first, the predominance of Jewish elements in Martines' doctrine; second, the relations he appears to have had with the Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux, as well as, as we have already noted previously, Saint-Martin's presentation of Eleazar as a "Spanish Jew"; Finally, there was the necessity, for initiatory work to be carried out in a non-Jewish environment, of "grafting," so to speak, the doctrine received from this source onto an initiatory form prevalent in the Western world, which, in the 18th century, could only be Freemasonry.

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4 1. Extract published by Papus, Martines de Pasqually, p. 124

5 Moreover, one should not believe that, when Martines speaks of China, this should always be taken literally, because, as Mr. Le Forestier pointed out, he uses the word *Chinois*, as a kind of anagram of "Noachites".

6 One hundred, of course, with the reservation that the journeys in question, if not to be attributed entirely to this single person, should perhaps be partly attributed to his initiator.

7 The journeys of which Falcke speaks would coincide approximately with the period when the Jews were expelled from Spain; however, we do not wish to say that there is any reason to attach great importance to this connection.

This last point raises further questions to which we will have to return; but, before that, we must point out that the very fact that Martines never mentions the exact origin of his knowledge, or that he vaguely relates it to the "Orient", is perfectly understandable: since he could not transmit as such the initiation that he himself had received, he did not have to indicate its origin, which would have been at least useless; it seems that, in his letters, he never expressly alluded to his "predecessors" except once, and that without adding the slightest detail, therefore without affirming in short anything more than the existence of some kind of initiatory transmission[8]. 11. It is quite certain, in any case, that the form of this initiation was not that of the Order of the Elected Coens, since the latter did not exist before Martines himself, and we see him developing it little by little, from 1754 to 1774, without ever having been able to fully organize it[9].

Here naturally lies the answer to an objection that may occur to some: if Martines was "commissioned" by some initiatory organization, how is it that his Order was not, in a way, entirely "preformed" from the outset, with its rituals and degrees, and that, in fact, it always remained in a state of imperfect draft, without anything being definitively established? Undoubtedly, many of the higher-degree Masonic systems that emerged around the same time were in the same situation, and some existed little more than "on paper"; But if they simply represented the particular conceptions of an individual or a group, there is nothing surprising about that, whereas for the work of the authorized representative of a real initiatic organization, things, it seems, should have turned out quite differently. This is to consider the matter only superficially; in reality, on the contrary, one must consider that Martines' "mission" precisely involved the work of "adaptation" that was to lead to the formation of the Order of the Elected Coens, work that his "predecessors" had not had to do because, for one reason or another, the time had not yet come, and perhaps they would not even have been able to do it—we will

8 " I have never sought to mislead anyone, nor to deceive those who came to me in good faith to acquire some knowledge that my predecessors transmitted to me" (quoted by Papus, Martines de Pasqually, p. 123).

9 When Willermos says that he succeeded his father in his ministry, it should not be translated, as Mr. Van Rijnberk too hastily does, as Sovereign Master of the Order, which, at that time, could not yet be in any way a question.

explain why later. Martines was unable to bring this work to a complete conclusion, but this proves nothing against what lay at the outset; in truth, two causes appear to have contributed to this partial failure: it is possible, on the one hand, that a series of unfavorable circumstances continually obstructed what Martines intended; And it is also possible, on the other hand, that he himself was inferior to his task, despite the "psychic powers" he manifestly possessed, which should have facilitated it for him, whether he had them in a completely natural and spontaneous way, as sometimes happens, or, more probably, he had been specially "prepared" for this purpose. Willermoz himself acknowledges that "his verbal inconsistencies and his imprudence have provoked reproaches and much unpleasantness"[10]; it seems that these imprudences consisted above all in making promises he could not keep, or at least not immediately, and also in sometimes admitting too readily individuals who were not sufficiently "qualified." No doubt, like many others, after receiving the necessary "preparation," he had to work on his own at his own risk and peril; at least, he does not appear to have ever committed any errors that would have caused him to withdraw his initiation, since he actively pursued his work until the very last moment and ensured its transmission before dying. Moreover, we are far from thinking that the initiation Martines received was beyond a certain, still quite limited, degree, and in any case did not exceed the realm of "minor mysteries," nor did his knowledge, although very real, truly possess the "transcendent" character that he himself seems to have attributed to it. We have already explained this on another occasion[11], and we pointed out, as characteristic features in this regard, the "ceremonial magic" aspect of the ritual "operations," and the importance attached to results of a purely "phenomenal" order. This is not a reason, however, to reduce these results, and even less so Martines' "powers," to the level of mere "metapsychic phenomena," as they are understood today. Mr. van Rijnberk, who seems to hold this view, is clearly harboring very great illusions about the scope of the latter, as well as about that of modern psychological theories, illusions that, for our part, we find it quite impossible to share.

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10 Letter already cited to Baron von Türkheim (July 1821).

11 *A new book on the Order of the Elect Coens,* published in December 1929.

On the other hand, we must add a remark of particular importance: the very fact that the Order of the Elected Coens was a new form did not allow it to constitute, on its own and independently, a valid and regular initiation; for this reason, it could only recruit its members from among those who already belonged to an initiatory organization, to which it thus came to be superimposed as a set of higher degrees; and, as we said above, this organization, providing it with the indispensable basis which it would otherwise have lacked, had to be inevitably Freemasonry! Consequently, one of the conditions required by Martines' "preparation", in addition to the teaching received elsewhere, had to be the acquisition of Masonic degrees; this condition was probably lacking in his "predecessors", and that is why they could not have done what he did. It was indeed as a Freemason, and not otherwise, that Martines presented himself from the beginning, and it was "within pre-existing Lodges that, like any founder of a system of high degrees, he undertook, with more or less success depending on the case, to build the "Temples" where some members of these same Lodges, chosen as the most suitable, would work according to the rite of the Elected Coens. On this point at least, there can be no ambiguity: if Martines received a mission," it was that of founding a Masonic rite or "regime" of high degrees, into which he would introduce, by clothing them in an appropriate form, the teachings that he had drawn from another initiatory source.

(*To be continued*)

July 1936

“OPERATIVE” AND “SPECULATIVE”

When treating the question of initiatic qualifications, allusion was made to a certain very widespread misunderstanding concerning the meaning of the word ‘operative’, and also, consequently, concerning that of ‘speculative’, which in a way is its opposite; and as we said then, it scems to us that there is reason to dwell more particularly on this subject in that there is a strict connection between this error and a general misunderstanding about what initiation really is. The question arises historically, so to speak, more particularly in connection with Masonry because it is here that the terms under discussion are most commonly used; but it is not difficult to understand that fundamentally it has a much more general scope and involves something that, according to different modalities, can apply to all initiatic forms, which is what constitutes all its importance from our point of view.

The starting-point of the error lies here. Because the form of Masonic initiation is linked to a craft, which is far from exceptional, as we have noted, and because its symbols and rites, in a word its particular methods in all their ‘specificity’, rest essentially on the” craft of building, people have come to confuse ‘operative’ with ‘corporative’, stopping thus at the most outward and superficial aspect of things, as is natural for anyone who has no idea or even suspicion of initiatic ‘realization’, The most widespread opinion can therefore be formulated as follows. ‘Operative’ Masons were exclusively craftsmen; little by little they ‘accepted’ as honorary members as it were people unacquainted with the art of building[1], but finally this second element came to predominate, so (hat ‘operative’ Masonry was transformed into

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a ‘speculative’ Masonry having only a fictitious or ‘ideal’ connection with the craft. This ‘speculative’ Masonry dates, as we know, from the beginning of the eighteenth century; but some, noting the presence of non-worker members in the former ‘operative’ Masonry, believe that they can conclude from this that these latter were already ‘speculative’ Masons. In each case it appears to be the almost unanimous opinion that the change that gave rise to ‘speculative’ Masonry marks a superiority with respect to that from which it derives, as if it represented a kind of ‘progress’ in the ‘intellectual’ sense and corresponded to a conception of a more elevated level; and they do not hesilate in this regard to oppose ‘speculations’ of ‘thought’ to the occupations of the craft, as if it were this that is in question, whereas it is instead a matter of things relating, not to profane activities, but to the initiatic domain.

There was formerly no other distinction in Masonry than that between ‘free’ Masons, men of the craft so called because of the exemptions granted by the sovereigns to their guilds (and no doubt also, and perhaps even especially, because the condition of free birth was one of the qualifications for admission to initiation)[2], and ‘accepted’ Masons, who were not professionals, and among whom ecclesiastics, who were initiated into special Lodges[3] in order to fulfill the function of ‘chaplains’ in ordinary Lodges, had a separate place. But both were equally, though in different capacities, members of one and the same organization of ‘operative’ Masonry; and how could it have been otherwise when no Lodge could function normally without a ‘chaplain’, and thus without at least one ‘accepted’ Mason among its members[4]? ‘Speculative’ Masonry, moreover, was formed precisely among these ‘accepted’ Masons and by their action;[5] and this can be explained simply enough by the fact that, not being directly attached to the craft and thus

2 One cannot, without diverting words entirely fiom their legitimate meaning, give any other interpretation to the expression free-born, which is applied to the candidate for initiation and surely has nothing to do with freedom from some sort of so-called ‘piejudice’!

3 In ancient ‘operative’ Masonry, these Loclges were called Lodges of Jakin and the ‘chaplain’ himself was called Brother Jakin.

4 Actually, we ought to say that it was obliged to have two, the other being a physician

5 These Masons moreover did not ieceive all the ‘operative’ trades, and this explains the existence at the beginning of ‘modern’ Masonry of ceirtain lacunae that had subsequently to be filled, which could not be done except thiough the intervention of the survivors from ‘ancient’ Masomty who were much more numerous in the eighteenth century than historians geneially believe.

lacking a solid basis for the initiatic work in question, they could more easily or more completely than the others lose sight of a part of what constitutes initiation—we could even say the most important part since it is this that properly concerns 'realization'[6]. It must further be added that because of their social situation and their outward relationships they were perhaps more open to certain influences of the profane world, political, philosophical, or otherwise, all working in the same direction and 'distracting' them, in the proper meaning of the word, from the initiatic work, even if these influences did not go so far as to lead them into unfortunate confusions between the two domains, as was later to happen only too often.

Having started with historical considerations for the convenience of our account, we here touch on the very root of the question: the passage from 'operative' to 'speculative', far from representing 'progress' (as the moderns, who do not understand its significance, would like to think), is in fact quite the opposite from the initiatic point of view. It does not necessarily imply a deviation properly speaking, but it implies at least a degeneration in the sense of a diminution; and as we have just said, this diminution consists in the neglect and forgetfulness of all that realization is—for it is this that's truly 'operative'—leaving nothing more than a purely theoretical view of initiation. It must not be forgotten thal 'speculation' and 'theory' are indeed synonyms, the word 'theory' of course not being taken here in its original meaning of 'contemplation' but solely in the sense it always has in current language, which the word 'speculation' no doubt expresses more clearly, since its very derivation implies the idea of something that is only a 'reflection', like an image seen in a mirror,[7] that is to say an indirect knowledge as opposed to the effective knowledge that is the immediate consequence of 'realization', or rather which is one with it. On the other hand, the word 'operative' must not be taken as an exact equivalent of 'practical', for this latter term always refers to 'action' (which conforms strictly to its etymology)

6 We pointed out this difference previously in connection with the present state of the Compagnonnage and Masonry, members of the former readily calling the Masons 'their speculative Brothers'; and while this expression implies the recognition of a common origin, it also sometimes contains a certain nuance of disdain, which is indeed not entirely unjustified, as one can understand from what we have explained here.

7 The word *speculum* in Latin means "mirror".

and thus could not be employed here without equivocation or impropriety;[8] in reality, it is a question of that ‘accomplishmenv of the being that is initiatic ‘realization’, with all the different means that can be used in view of this end; and it is not without interest to note that a word of the same origin, oeuvre, is also used precisely in this sense in alchemical terminology.

It is thus easy to see what remains in the case of an initiation that has become merely ‘speculative’. The initiatic transmission indeed still exists, since the traditional ‘chain’ has not been broken, but instead of the possibility of an effective initiation as long as some individual defect creates no obstacle, there remains no more than a virtual initiation that by the very nature of things is condemned to remain so, since the ‘speculative’ limitation properly signifies that this stage cannot be surpassed, as all that goes further belongs by very definition to the ‘operative’ order. This of course is not to say that the rites have no effect in such a case, for they always remain the vehicle of a spiritual influence even if those who accomplish them are no longer conscious of this; but this effect is so to speak ‘deferred’ with respect to its development ‘in act’ and is like a seed that lacks the conditions necessary to germinate, these conditions residing in the ‘operative’ work by which alone the initiation can be made effective.

In this connection we must again emphasize that such a degeneration of an initiatic organization changes nothing with regard to its essential nature, and that the continuity of the transmission itself suffices to render a restoration always possible should more favorable circumstances arise, this restoration then necessarily being seen asa return to the ‘operative’ state. But it is evident that the more an organization is thus diminished, the greater the possibility of at least a partial deviation, which naturally can occur in many different directions; and these deviations, while only of an accidental character, render any restoration increasingly difficult in fact, although, despite everything, it still remains possible in principle. However that may be, an initiatic

8 Here we have all the difference that exists between the respective meanings of the Greek words *praxis* and *poesis.*

organization possessing an authentic and legitimate filiation, whatever may be the more or less degenerate state in which it presently finds itself, could assuredly never be confused with any pseudo-initiatic organization whatsoever, which is nothing at all, or with the counter-initiation, which indeed is something, though something absolutely negative running directly counter to the purpose of all true initiation[9].

On the other hand, the inferiority of the 'speculative' point of view as we have just described it illustrates yet again, almost to excess, that 'thought' cultivated for itself can never be the purpose of an initiatic organization as such, for an initiatic organization is not a place to 'philosophize' or to participate in 'academic' discussions, any more than to engage in any other kind of profane occupation.[10]

When philosophical 'speculation' is introduced into an initiatic organization, there is already a true deviation; whereas if 'speculation' about the initiatic domain be limited to itself rather than being a mere preparation for the 'operative' work, as it normally should be, there exists only the diminution of which we spoke earlier, Here we have another important distinction, though we think it sufficiently cleat that further emphasis should not be necessary; it can be said in summary that a deviation exists, more or less serious as the case may be, whenever there is a confusion between the initiatic and the profane points of view. This must not be forgotten whenever one wishes to evaluate the degree of degeneration to which an initiatic organization may have succumbed; but aside from any deviation, the terms 'operative' and 'speculative' can always be applied in a very exact way lo any initiatic form whatsoever by referring them respectively to effective initiation and to virtual initiation.

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9 We have on many occasions pointed out that such precisions are not at all superfluous; thus we must formally protest against any interpretation that tends, either by an intentional or an unintentional confusion, to apply to any initiatic organization what, in our writings, really relates either to pseudo-initiation or to the counter-initiation.

10 We have never understood just what is meant by the expression 'societies for thought', contrived by certain people to designate a category of groups that seems rather ill-defined; but what is certain is that even if something exists to which this label might apply, it could never have the least connection with any initiatic organization whatsoever.

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THE ENIGMA OF MARTINES DE PASQUALLY

Continued

When we examine Martines' initiatic activity, we must never lose sight of what we have just pointed out above, that is, its double connection with Masonry and with another much more mysterious organization, the first being indispensable to the role assigned him by the second. There is furthermore something enigmatic even in his Masonic affiliation, nothing of which can be clarified (something not in the least exceptional at the time, when there was an astounding variety of rites and 'regimes'), but which in any case is before 1754, since from that time on he appears not only as a Mason, as we have just said, but also as already provided with 'Scottish' high grades[1], This is what allowed him to undertake the constitution of his "Temples'—with varying degrees of success depending on the case—'withim of the Lodges of various towns of the South of France until 1761, when he finally established himself at Bordeaux. We need not retrace all these documented vicissitudes, recalling only that at the time the Order of the Elect Cohens was still far from its final form; and in fact neither the list of grades, nor with greater reason the rituals, would ever be completely fixed thereafter.

From our point of view the other side of the question is the more important, and in this respect it is essential to note that Martines himself never had claimed to pose as supreme head of an initiatic hierarchy. His title of 'Grand Sovereign' does not contradict this, for the word 'Sovereign' also figures in the titles of various Masonic grades and functions without in any way implying that those who bear them are exempt from any subordination; among the Elect Cohens themselves

1 On this subject we must however express some doubt as to the Masonic character attributed to the 'Knight of the Rose Croissante' by way of 'Squire': it is quite correct that this was the name of a Scottish grade, which has moreover survived up to our time in the Rectified Rite; but in Martines' case its mention in the official secular documents would seem rather to indicate that it was no more than a nobilary title. But it is of course true that the one does not exclude the other.

the ‘Réaux-Croix’ were also qualified as ‘Sovereign’, and Martines was ‘Grand Sovereign’ or ‘Sovereign of the Sovereigns’ because his jurisdiction extended over all of them. The clearest proof of this is found in the following passage of a etter from Martines to Willermoz dated October 2, 1768:

> *The opening of the circumferences that I performed last September 12th was to open [sic] the operation of the prescribed equinoxes so that I should not be remiss in my spiritual and temporal obligations, The circumferences are open until the solstices and are kept up by me so that I may be ready to work and pray for the health and peace of soul and mind of the principal chief, unknown to both you and your Réaux-Croix brothers, and regarding whom I must remain silent until he makes himself known. I fear no untoward event, for myself in particular or for any of our brothers generally, but for the Order itself in that it would lose a great deal if it lost such a leader. I can only speak allegorically to you on this subject.*[2]

Thus, according to his own admission Martines was in no way the ‘principal chief’ of the Order of the Elect Cohens; but since in a way we see him constitute himself as such before our eyes, it was necessary that this leader be the one (or one of those) from the organization to inspire this new formation; and would not the fear Martines expressed be that the disappearance of this person might lead to the premature interruption of certain communications? Furthermore, it is quite clear that what he says can in any case apply only to a living man and not to some phantasmagorical entity; the occultists have spread so many fantastic ideas of this kind that such a remark is not entirely superfluous.

It could perhaps still be said that here it is only a question of the hidden leader of some Masonic organization;[3] but this hypothesis is ruled out

2 Cited by P. Vulliaud, Les Rose-Croix lyonnais au XVIII siecle, p72. — We do not know why in this connection Vulliaud speaks of ‘Unknown Superiors’, even saying that Martines speaks of them in this letter, whereas he has not made the least allusion to any such designation. On the other hand, when Martines uses the word ‘allegorically’, it is very likely he means ‘enigmatically’, for there is no trace of ‘allegory’ in all this.

3 If such was the case, some would perhaps identify this person with the pretender Charles-Edward Stuart, to whom, rightly or wrongly, a similar role has been attributed. If we allude to this here, it is because

by another document produced by van Rijnberk, a resumé by the baron of Turkheim of a letter Willermoz addressed to him on March 25, 1822, of which the beginning reads:

> *As to Pasqually, he has always said that in his position as Sovereign 'Réaux' for his region, which included the whole of Europe, he could make and support successively twelve 'Réaux', who would be dependent on him and whom he would name his Equals.*[4]

It follows that Martines held these 'powers, which moreover were carefully defined, from an organization that extended outside Europe (which was not the case of Masonry at this time),[5] and of which the principal seat must also have been outside, for if the latter were in Europe itself, the 'delegation' Martines received for this region would not have been able to carry any true 'sovereignty. On the other hand, if what we said earlier of the Sephardic origin of Martines' initiation is correct, this place could very well be in North Africa, which is by far the most likely supposition. But in this case it is quite clear that it would not be a question of a Masonic organization and that it is not here that we should seek the 'power' by which Martines was instituted 'Sovereign Réaux' for a region coinciding with Masonry's entire sphere of influence, which would in other respects justify his foundation of high grades of the Order of the Elect Cohens, in the special form of a 'regime'.[6]

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it could derive some plausibility from the fact that the 'Knight of the Rose Croissante' speaks of the 'marks of esteem and recognition that the claimant Stuart seemed to show to Martines' when the latter presented himself before the Lodges of Toulouse, that is in 1760, eight years before the letter just cited; but what follows will show that something quite different must be involved.

4 These are the former, also called 'Sovereigns', as we said above. We call attention to this number twelve, which continually recurs wherever the constitution of initiatic centers is concerned, whatever traditional form may be involved.

5 It is useless to speak here of America, which from the Masonic point of view represented at that time nothing more than a dependency of Europe.

6 The terms Willermoz employs seem to indicate that the region placed under Martines' authority did not include Europe alone; it would also have included America, as is shown by the importance it later assumed in San Domingo's history of his life and Order; and this again confirms that the sphere of activity attributed to him coincided with the group of countries where Masonry existed, and where it was even the sole surviving initiatic organization capable of furnishing a basis for the work with which it was charged.

The demise of this Order is scarcely less obscure than is its beginning. Martines' two successors did not long exercise the functions of 'Grand Sovereign', for the first, Caignet de Lestére, died in 1778, four years after Martines, and the second, Sébastien de Las Casas, retired two years later, in 1780. What remained thereafter as far as a regularly constituted organization is concerned? It seems that very little remained, and that if a few "Temples? did persist for a time after 1780, this hardly deferred the cessation of all activity. As for the designation of another 'Grand Sovereign' following the retirement of Sébastien de Las Casas, it is nowhere in question; there was however a letter from the Knight of Bacon, dated January 26, 1807, speaking of the 'absolute silence of the Elect Cohens, who always acted with the greatest discretion in executing the supreme orders of the Sovereign Master, G.". Z.". W.. J... But what can we make of such information, as bizarre as it is enigmatic, and perhaps even quite fanciful? In any case, in the letter of 1822 just cited, Willermoz states that, 'of all the Réaux he has known, none still live, just as it was impossible for him to name one after him'; and if there were no longer any 'Réaux-Croix' there will be no transmission to perpetuate the Order of the Elect Cohens.

Apart from 'direct survival', to use to van Rijnberk's expression, the latter envisages an 'indirect survival' consisting in what he calls the two 'Willermozist and Martinist metamorphoses'; but here we have an ambiguity that should be clarified. The Rectified Scottish Rite is not a metamorphosis of the Elect Cohens but a derivation from the Strict Observance, which is totally different; and if it is true that by means of the dominant role he played in the development of the rituals of its higher grades (in particular that of "Knight Beneficent of the Holy City'), Willermoz was able to introduce some of the ideas he had taken from Martines' organization, it is no less true that the great majority of the Elect Cohens strongly reproached him for the interest he had thus shown in another rite, which in their eyes was almost a betrayal, just as they reproached Saint-Martin for a change in attitude of another kind.

This case of Saint-Martin must engage us a while longer, if only because so much has been made of it in our time; the truth is that, if Saint-Martin

abandoned all the Masonic rites to which he had been linked, including that of the Elect Cohens, this was in order to adopt an exclusively mystical attitude, one therefore incompatible with the initiatic point of view, and certainly not to found a new Order himself. In fact, the name 'Martinism', commonly used only in the profane world, applies only to Saint-Martin's particular doctrines and the adherents thereof, whether or not these latter were directly related to him. What is more, Saint-Martin himself, not without some irony, qualified those who simply read his works as 'Martinist' It would seem however that several of his disciples did receive from him individually a certain 'deposit', which actually consisted of only 'two letters and some periods'; and this transmission is held to be the source of modern 'Martinism' But even if all this is true, how could such a communication, effected without any rite, represent an initiation? The two letters in question are 'S' and 'T, which, whatever interpretation one may give them (and there are many), seem to have exercised a real fascination on some people; but in the present case what can be their provenance? Surely this was not a reminiscence of the 'Unknown Superiors' [Supérieurs Inconnus] of the Strict Observance; besides, there is no need to look so far, for some Elect Cohens used these letters in their signature, and van Rijnberk offers a very plausible hypothesis when he suggests that they could have been the distinctive mark of the members of the 'Sovereign Tribunal' charged with the administration of the Order (to which Saint-Martin himself belonged, as did Willermoz); they would therefore have indicated not a grade, but simply a function. In these conditions, it could in spite of everything seem strange that Saint-Martin should have adopted these letters rather than 'R. C., for example, if they had not had in themselves their own symbolic significance, from which when all is said and done their various usages were merely derived, Be that as it may, there is a curious fact which shows that Saint-Martin really did attach a certain importance to them, which is that, in the Crocodile, he used these initials to form the name of an imaginary 'Society of Independents', which was not really a society or even an organization, but rather a kind of a mystical communion presided over by Madame Jof, that is to say Faith personified.[7] And another peculiar point is that toward the end of

7 For his part, Willermoz also makes use of the same initials to give the name 'Society of Initiates' to the

the story the Jew Eléazar is admitted into this ‘Society of Independents’, no doubt we should see this as an allusion, not to something concerning Martines personally, but much rather to Saint-Martin’s passage from the doctrine of the Elect Cohens to this mysticism into which he withdrew during the whole of the last part of his life; and, in communicating to his nearest disciples the letters ‘S. I? as a kind of sign of recognition, may he not have wanted to say that they could consider themselves members of what he had wanted to represent by the ‘Society of Independents’?

These final observations will make clear why we are far from sharing the overly ‘optimistic’ views of van Rijnberk, who, in wondering whether the Order of the Elect Cohens ‘completely and exclusively belongs to the past; is inclined to reply in the negative, while however recognizing the absence of all direct filiation, which is the sole is consideration in the initiatic domain. The Rectified Scottish Rite certainly still exists, contrary to what he seems to believe, but in no way originates in what we are discussing. As for modern ‘Martinism,, we can assure him that it has very little to do with Saint Martin, and absolutely nothing to do with Martines and the Elect Cohens.

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very real group he founded for the study of certain somnambulistic phenomena.

August 1936

THE WILD BOAR AND THE BEAR

Among the Celts, the boar and the bear symbolized respectively the representatives of spiritual authority and those of temporal power, that is to say, the two castes of Druids and Knights, equivalent, at least originally and in their essential functions, to what in India are those of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. As we have indicated elsewhere[1], this symbolism, of clearly Hyperborean origin, is one of the marks of the direct connection of the Celtic tradition with the primordial tradition of the present Manvantara, whatever other elements, deriving from earlier traditions but already secondary and derivative, may have been able to attach themselves to this principal current and, in a certain manner, be reabsorbed into it. What we mean here is that the Celtic tradition could plausibly be regarded as constituting one of the "points of junction" of the Atlantean tradition with the Hyperborean tradition, after the end of the secondary period during which this Atlantean tradition represented the predominant form, and as the "substitute" for the original center already inaccessible to ordinary humanity[2]; and, on this point as well, the same symbolism we have just mentioned may provide some indications that are not without interest.

Let us first note the importance also given to the symbol of the boar by the Hindu tradition, itself directly issuing from the primordial tradition and expressly affirming in the Veda its own Hyperborean origin. The boar (varāha) does not appear there only, as is well known, as the third of the ten avatāras of Vishnu in the present Manvantara; but our entire Kalpa, that is to say, the entire cycle of manifestation of our world, is designated there as Shwêta-varāha-Kalpa, the "cycle of the white boar."

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1 Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel, pp. 19–20.

2 Cf. Le Roi du Monde, pp. 111 ff., notably as regards the relations of Hyperborean Tula and Atlantean Tula (Tula being one of the primary designations of spiritual centers); see also our article Atlantide et Hyperborée (October 1929).

That being so, and if one considers the analogy that necessarily exists between the great cycle and the subordinate cycles, it is natural that the mark of the Kalpa, if one may express it thus, should be found again at the point of departure of the Manvantara; and that is why the polar "sacred land," seat of the primordial spiritual center of this Manvantara, is also called Vārāhī, or the "land of the boar"[3].

Moreover, since it was there that the first spiritual authority resided, of which every other legitimate authority of the same order is only an emanation, it is no less natural that the representatives of such an authority should also have received the symbol of the boar as their distinctive sign and should have retained it in the course of time; and that is why the Druids designated themselves as "boars," although, since symbolism always has multiple aspects, one may at the same time see in it, secondarily, an allusion to the isolation in which they maintained themselves with regard to the outer world, the boar being always regarded as the "solitary." It must be added, moreover, that this isolation itself, realized materially, among the Celts as among the Hindus, in the form of a retreat in the forest, is not without relation to the characteristics of "primordiality," a reflection of which must always have been maintained in every spiritual authority worthy of the function it fulfills.

But let us return to the name Vārāhī, which gives rise to particularly important remarks: it is considered as an aspect of the Shakti of Vishnu (and more especially in relation to his third avatāra), which, given the "solar" character of the latter, immediately shows its identity with the primitive "solar land" or "Syria" of which we have spoken on other occasions[4], and which is yet another designation of Hyperborean Tula, that is to say, of the primordial spiritual center. On the other hand, the root var, for the name of the boar, is found in the Nordic languages in the form bor[5]; the exact equivalent of Vārāhī is therefore "Borea," and

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3 See again on this subject Atlantide et Hyperborée (October 1929); we pointed out there that, contrary to what Saint-Yves d'Alveydre seems to have thought, this name Vārāhī in no way applies to Europe; in truth, the latter was never anything but the "Land of the Bull," which refers to a period far removed from the origins

4 See "The Science of Letters' and 'The Land of the Sun'.

5 In English bear, in German Bär.

the truth is that the usual name "Hyperborea" was employed only by the Greeks at a time when they had already lost the sense of this ancient designation; it would therefore be preferable, despite the usage that has prevailed since then, to qualify the primordial tradition not as "Hyperborean" but simply as "Borean," thereby unequivocally affirming its connection with "Borea" or the "land of the boar."

There is yet something else: the root var or vri, in Sanskrit, has the meanings "to cover," "to protect," and "to conceal"; and, as is shown by the name Varuna and its Greek equivalent Ouranos, it serves to designate the sky, both because it covers the earth and because it represents the higher worlds, hidden from the senses[6]. Now all this applies perfectly to the spiritual centers, whether because they are hidden from the eyes of the profane, or because they protect the world by their invisible influence, or finally because they are, on earth, like images of the celestial world itself. Let us add that the same root also has another meaning, that of "choice" or "election" (vara), which obviously is no less suitable for the region that is everywhere designated by names such as "land of the elect," "land of the saints," or "land of the blessed"[7].

One may have noted, in what we said earlier, the union of the two "polar" and "solar" symbolisms; but, as far as the boar properly speaking is concerned, it is the "polar" aspect that matters above all; and this moreover results from the fact that the boar formerly represented the constellation which later became the Great Bear[8]. There is, in this substitution of names, one of the marks of what the Celts symbolized precisely by the struggle of the boar and the bear, that is to say, the revolt of the representatives of temporal power against the supremacy of spiritual authority, with the various vicissitudes that followed in the course of successive historical epochs. The first manifestations of this revolt, in fact, go back much further than ordinarily known history, and

6 Cf. Le Roi du Monde, ch. 7, where we showed also that the Latin word coelum itself originally had the same meaning.

7 Let us point out again, by way of a possible comparison, the Germanic root ur, which has a meaning of "primordiality."

8 It should be born in mind that this constellation has also had many other names, among them that of the scales; but it would be beyond the range of this chapter to deal with it here.

even further than the beginning of the Kali-Yuga, in which it was to take on its greatest extension; that is why the name bor could be transferred from the boar to the bear[9], and why "Borea" itself, the "land of the boar," could consequently become, at a certain moment, the "land of the bear," during a period of predominance of the Kshatriyas, which, according to the Hindu tradition, was brought to an end by Parashu-Rāma[10].

In this same Hindu tradition, the most usual name of the Great Bear is sapta-riksha; and the Sanskrit word riksha is the name of the bear, linguistically identical to that which it bears in various other languages: Celtic arth, Greek arktos, and even Latin ursus. However, one may ask whether this is indeed the primary meaning of the expression sapta-riksha, or whether there was not rather, corresponding to the substitution we have just spoken of, a kind of superposition of etymologically distinct words, but brought together and even identified by the application of a certain phonetic symbolism. In fact, riksha also means, in a general way, a star, that is to say, in sum, a "light" (archis, from the root arch or ruch, "to shine" or "to illuminate"); and, on the other hand, the sapta-riksha is the symbolic dwelling of the seven Rishis, who, besides the fact that their name relates to "vision," thus to light, are themselves also the seven "Lights" through which the Wisdom of previous cycles was transmitted to the present cycle[11]. The connection thus established between the bear and light does not, moreover, constitute an isolated case in animal symbolism, for one encounters an entirely similar one for the wolf, both among the Celts and among the Greeks[12], from which resulted its attribution to the solar god, Belen or Apollo.

In a certain period, the name sapta-riksha was applied no longer to the

9 In German Bär.

10 We have already had occasion to point out, in this connection, that Fabre d'Olivet and those who followed him, such as Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, seem to have made a rather strange confusion between Parashu-Rāma and Rāma-Chandra, that is to say, between the sixth and seventh avatāras of Vishnu.

11 One will note the persistence of these "seven Lights" in Masonic symbolism: the presence of the same number of persons representing them is necessary both for the constitution of a "just and perfect" Lodge and for the validity of initiatic transmission. — Let us also note that the seven stars spoken of at the beginning of the Apocalypse (I, 16 and 20) would, according to certain interpretations, be those of the Great Bear.

12 In Greek, the wolf is lukos and light luki; hence the epithet with double meaning of Lycian Apollo.

Great Bear but to the Pleiades, which also comprise seven stars; this transfer from a polar constellation to a zodiacal constellation corresponds to a passage from solstitial symbolism to equinoctial symbolism, implying a change in the point of departure of the annual cycle, as well as in the order of predominance of the cardinal points that are related to the different phases of this cycle[13]. This change is here that from North to West, which refers to the Atlantean period; and this is clearly confirmed by the fact that, for the Greeks, the Pleiades were daughters of Atlas and, as such, also called Atlantides. Transfers of this kind are moreover often the cause of multiple confusions, the same names having received, according to the periods, different applications, and this as much for terrestrial regions as for celestial constellations, so that it is not always easy to determine to what they refer exactly in each case, and that this is even really possible only on the condition of relating their various "localizations" to the characteristics proper to the corresponding traditional forms, as we have just done for those of the sapta-riksha.

Among the Greeks, the revolt of the Kshatriyas was figured by the hunt of the Calydonian boar, which moreover manifestly represents a version in which the Kshatriyas themselves express their claim to attribute to themselves a definitive victory, since the boar is there killed by them; and Athenaeus reports, following earlier authors, that this Calydonian boar was white[14], which clearly identifies it with the Shwêta-varāha of the Hindu tradition[15]. What is no less significant from our point of view is that the first blow was struck by Atalanta, who, it is said, had been nourished by a bear; and this name Atalanta could indicate that the revolt had its beginning either in Atlantis itself, or at least among the heirs of its tradition[16]. On the other hand, the name Calydon is found exactly in that of Caledonia, the ancient name of Scotland: apart from any question of particular "localization," it is properly the land of the

13 The transfer of the Scales into the Zodiac naturally also has a similar significance.

14 Deipnosophistarum, IX, 13.

15 It is scarcely necessary to recall that white is also the color symbolically attributed to spiritual authority; and it is known that the Druids, in particular, wore white garments.

16 There are also other curious parallels in this respect, as for example between the golden apples of the legend of Atalanta and those of the garden of the Hesperides or 'daughters of the West', who were also daughters of Atlas, as were the Pleiads.

"Kaldes" or Celts[17]; and the forest of Calydon does not in reality differ from that of Brocéliande, whose name is still the same, although under a somewhat modified form, and preceded by the root bro or bor, that is to say, by the very name of the boar.

The fact that the bear is often taken symbolically under its feminine aspect, as we have just seen in connection with Atalanta, and as one also sees from the denominations of the constellations of the Great Bear and the Little Bear, is also not without significance as regards its attribution to the warrior caste, holder of temporal power, and this for several reasons. First, this caste normally has a "receptive" role, that is to say, a feminine one, vis-à-vis the sacerdotal caste, since it is from the latter that it receives not only the teaching of traditional doctrine but also the legitimation of its own power, in which strictly consists the "divine right." Next, when this same warrior caste, overturning the normal relations of subordination, lays claim to supremacy, its predominance is generally accompanied by that of feminine elements in the symbolism of the traditional form modified by it, and sometimes even also, as a consequence of this modification, by the institution of a feminine form of priesthood, such as that of the Druidesses among the Celts. We merely indicate here this last point, the development of which would take us too far, especially if we wished to seek elsewhere for concordant examples; but at least this indication suffices to make understood why it is the she-bear, rather than the bear, that is symbolically opposed to the boar.

It should be added that the two symbols of the boar and the bear do not always necessarily appear as being in opposition or in struggle, but that, in certain cases, they can also represent spiritual authority and temporal power, or the two castes of Druids and Knights, in their normal and harmonious relations, as one sees notably in the legend of Merlin and Arthur. In fact, Merlin, the Druid, is still the boar of the forest of Brocéliande (where he is moreover finally not killed like the Calydonian boar, but only put to sleep by a feminine power); and King Arthur bears

17 It is moreover probable that this name of the Celts, like that of the Chaldeans which is identical with it, was not originally that of a particular people, but that of a sacerdotal caste exercising spiritual authority among different peoples.

a name derived from that of the bear, arth[18]; more precisely, this name is identical to that of the star Arcturus, taking into account the slight difference due to their respectively Celtic and Greek derivations. This star is found in the constellation of the Herdsman (Boötes), and, by these names, one may still see brought together the marks of two different periods: the "garden of the Bear" became the Herdsman when the Bear itself, or the sapta-riksha, became the septem triones, that is to say, the "seven oxen" (whence the appellation "Septentrion" to designate the North); but we do not have to concern ourselves here with these transformations, relatively recent with respect to what we are considering[19].

From the considerations we have just set forth, a conclusion seems to emerge regarding the respective role of the two currents that contributed to forming the Celtic tradition: originally, spiritual authority and temporal power were not separated as two differentiated functions, but united in their common principle, and one finds a vestige of this union in the very name of the Druids (dru-vid, "force-wisdom," these two terms being symbolized by the oak and the mistletoe)[20]; in this capacity, and also as representing more particularly spiritual authority, to which the upper part of the doctrine is reserved, they were the true heirs of the primordial tradition, and the essentially "Borean" symbol, that of the boar, belonged to them in their own right. As for the Knights, having the bear (or the she-bear of Atalanta) as their symbol, one may think that the part of the tradition that was more especially destined for them comprised above all the elements proceeding from the Atlantean tradition, and this distinction might even perhaps help to explain certain more or less enigmatic points in the later history of Western traditions

18 One also finds in Scotland, as a family name, Mac-Arth, or "son of the bear," which obviously indicates membership in a warrior clan.

19 Arthur is the son of Uther Pendragon, the "chief of the five," the supreme ruler who resides in the fifth kingdom, that of Afal or Avallon, situated at the center of the four other subordinate kingdoms located at the four cardinal points (see Le Roi du Monde, pp. 110–113); and this role is comparable to that of the celestial Dragon when, containing the polar influence, it was "in the middle of the sky like a king upon his throne," according to the expression of the Sepher Yetsirah (cf. our already cited article La Terre du Soleil).

20 See Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel, pp. 59–60, where we indicated the equivalence of this symbolism with that of the Sphinx.

October 1936

TRADITION AND TRADITIONALISM

We have already had very frequent occasion to point out examples of the abuse of certain words, diverted from their true meaning, which is one of the symptoms of the intellectual confusion of our time, so that we would almost be tempted to excuse ourselves for returning once more to a subject relating to considerations of this order. Yet there are ambiguities that cannot be dissipated at a single stroke, but only by insistence; and, on the point that presently concerns us, this has become more necessary than ever in current circumstances, in order to forestall any attempt at illegitimate use of the very idea of "tradition" by those who would like unduly to assimilate what it implies to their own conceptions in some domain or another. It must moreover be clearly understood that it is not a question here of suspecting the good faith of one person or another, for in many cases there may quite simply be nothing more than pure misunderstanding; the ignorance of the majority of our contemporaries with regard to everything that possesses a genuinely traditional character is so complete that there is not even cause for astonishment. But at the same time one is forced to recognize that these errors of interpretation and these involuntary misunderstandings serve certain "plans" far too well for it not to be permissible to ask whether their increasing diffusion might not be due to some of those "suggestions" that dominate the modern mentality and that, precisely, always tend at bottom toward the destruction of everything that is tradition in the true sense of the word.

Let us explain ourselves more fully on this point: the modern mentality itself, in everything that specifically characterizes it as such, is in sum only the product of a vast collective suggestion which, exercised continually over the course of several centuries, has determined the formation and progressive development of the anti-traditional spirit, in

which, in the final analysis, the entire ensemble of the distinctive traits of this mentality is summed up. We do not have to ask ourselves here whether what thus appears as an anomaly, and even as a veritable monstrosity, does not nevertheless find its place within a more general order, or, in other terms, whether, by virtue of the very "cyclical laws" to which we have often alluded, such a deviation did not have to occur inevitably at this period; that is a completely different aspect of the question. What we have in view at present is only the "technique" by which this deviation could in fact have been brought about, and it is this "technique" that can be described as accurately as possible by defining it as a kind of collective suggestion. But however powerful and however skillful this suggestion may be, there can come a moment when the state of disorder and imbalance that results from it becomes so apparent that certain people can no longer fail to notice it, and then there is a risk that a "reaction" will arise that compromises this very result; it seems indeed that today things have reached precisely this point, and it is here that what we could call the "counterfeit" of the traditional idea intervenes effectively, in order to divert this "reaction" from the goal toward which it tends.

If this "counterfeit" is possible, it is because of the ignorance of which we spoke above: the very idea of tradition has been destroyed to such an extent, in the modern Western world, that those who aspire to rediscover it scarcely know in which direction to turn, and that they are only too ready to accept the false ideas that will be presented to them in its place and under its name. These people have realized, at least to a certain degree, that they had been deceived by openly anti-traditional suggestions, and that the beliefs that had thus been imposed upon them represented only error and disappointment; that is assuredly something in the sense of the "reaction" of which we have just spoken, but, in sum, it is still entirely negative. One becomes well aware of this by reading writings, increasingly numerous, in which one finds the most just criticisms with regard to present-day "civilization," but in which the means envisaged for remedying the evils thus denounced have a strangely disproportionate and insignificant character, childish even in a way: "scholastic" or "academic" projects, one might say, but nothing

more, and above all nothing that testifies to the least knowledge of a profound order. It is at this stage that the effort, however laudable and meritorious it may be, can easily allow itself to be diverted toward "activities" which, in their own way and despite certain appearances, will only contribute in the end to increasing still further the disorder and confusion of this "civilization" whose correction they are supposed to bring about.

Those of whom we have just spoken are those whom one may call "traditionalists," when one takes this word in its legitimate sense; in fact, it can properly indicate only a simple tendency, a kind of aspiration toward tradition, without any real knowledge of it; and one can measure by this the entire distance that separates the "traditionalist" spirit from the true traditional spirit, which on the contrary essentially implies such knowledge. The "traditionalist" is and can only be a "seeker," and that is precisely why he is always in danger of going astray, not being in possession of the principles that alone would give him an infallible direction; and this danger will naturally be all the greater insofar as he will encounter along his path, like so many snares, all those false ideas brought forth by the power of illusion, which has a capital interest in preventing him from reaching the true goal of his search.

Indeed, it is evident that this power can maintain itself and continue to exercise its action only on the condition that any restoration of the traditional idea be rendered impossible; it is therefore just as important for it to deflect researches tending toward traditional knowledge as, on the other hand, those that, bearing upon the origins and the real causes of the modern deviation, would be capable of revealing something of its own nature and of its means of influence. There are here, for it, two necessities in a way complementary to one another, and which one could even regard, at bottom, as the positive and negative aspects of a single fundamental requirement of its domination.

All abusive uses of the word "tradition" can, to one degree or another, serve this end, beginning with the most vulgar of all, that which makes it synonymous with "custom" or "usage," thereby bringing about a

confusion of tradition with the most basely human things and those most completely devoid of any profound meaning. But there are other deformations that are more subtle and thereby more dangerous; all of them moreover have as their common characteristic that of lowering the idea of tradition to a purely human level, whereas, as we have often explained, there is nothing truly traditional except what implies an element of a supra-human order. This is the essential point, that which constitutes, in a way, the very definition of tradition and of everything that is connected with it; and it is also, of course, what must at all costs be prevented from being recognized in order to maintain the modern mentality in its illusions. One has only to see how those who claim to make themselves the "historians" of religions and of other traditional forms are above all bent on explaining them by exclusively human factors; it matters little whether, according to schools, these factors are psychological, social, or others, and even the multiplicity of explanations thus presented makes it easier to seduce a greater number. What is constant is the resolute will to reduce everything to the human and to allow nothing to subsist that surpasses it; and those who believe in the value of this destructive "criticism" are from then on entirely disposed to confuse tradition with anything whatsoever, since there is indeed nothing left, in the idea that has been inculcated in them, that could truly distinguish it from what is devoid of all traditional character.

Since everything that is of a purely human order cannot, for that very reason, be legitimately qualified as traditional, there cannot be, for example, any "philosophical tradition" or any "scientific tradition" in the modern and profane sense of that word; and, of course, there cannot be any "political tradition" either, at least where any truly traditional social organization is lacking, which is the case in the present Western world. Yet these are among the expressions that are commonly employed today and that constitute so many denaturations of the idea of tradition; and it goes without saying that, if the "traditionalist" minds of which we spoke earlier can be led to allow their activity to be diverted toward one or another of these essentially contingent domains and to limit all their efforts to them, their aspirations will thus be "neutralized" and rendered perfectly harmless, if they are not sometimes even used,

unbeknownst to them, in a sense entirely opposed to their intentions.

It even happens that one goes so far as to apply the name “tradition” to things that, by their very nature, are clearly anti-traditional: thus one speaks of a “humanist tradition,” or again of a “national tradition,” whereas “humanism,” as its very name indicates moreover, is nothing other than that negation of the supra-human which is at the root of the modern spirit in all its forms, and whereas the constitution of “nationalities” was the means employed to destroy the traditional social organization of the Middle Ages. There would therefore be no cause for astonishment, under these conditions, if one were someday to come to speak just as well of a “Protestant tradition,” or even of a “secular tradition” or a “revolutionary tradition”! At the degree of mental confusion to which the great majority of our contemporaries have arrived, the most manifestly contradictory associations of words no longer have anything that could frighten them, or even simply give them pause for reflection.

This leads us directly to another important remark: when certain people, having perceived the modern disorder by noting the all-too-visible degree to which it has now reached, wish to “react,” is not the best means of rendering this need for “reaction” ineffective to orient it toward one of the earlier and less “advanced” stages of the same deviation, where this disorder had not yet become so apparent and presented itself, so to speak, under aspects more acceptable to those who have not been completely blinded by certain suggestions? It is not sufficient to declare oneself sincerely “anti-modern,” as every “traditionalist” in intention must normally do, if one is still oneself affected by modern ideas under some form more or less attenuated and thereby no doubt more difficult to discern, but corresponding always in fact to one or another of the stages that these ideas have traversed in the course of their development; no “concession,” even involuntary or unconscious, is possible here, for from their point of departure to their present outcome everything is linked together and connected inexorably.

And in this regard we shall add yet this: the work whose aim is to

prevent the “reaction” from aiming further than a return to a lesser disorder, while moreover concealing the character of that disorder and making it pass for “order,” coincides exactly with that which is accomplished, on the other hand, to make the modern spirit penetrate into the very interior of what may subsist, in the West, of traditional organizations of every order; the same effect of “neutralization” of forces whose opposition might be feared is equally obtained in both cases. It is not even enough to speak of “neutralization,” for from the struggle that will inevitably occur between elements that are thus brought, so to speak, back to the same level, and whose hostility therefore represents, at bottom, only that which can exist between diverse and apparently contrary productions of the modern deviation, there can finally emerge only a new increase of disorder and confusion.

Among all the more or less incoherent things that are presently agitated and collide, among all the external “movements” of whatever kind they may be, there is therefore absolutely nothing, from the traditional or even simply “traditionalist” point of view, in which one should “take sides,” according to the commonly employed expression; for that would be to allow oneself to be duped, and, the same influences in reality being exercised behind all of this, it would be properly to play their game to involve oneself in struggles desired and invisibly directed by them. The mere fact of “taking sides” under these conditions would therefore already constitute in the end, however unconsciously it might be, a truly anti-traditional attitude.

We do not wish to make here any particular application, which would in sum be of little use after all that we have already said, and would moreover be entirely out of place; it appears to us only necessary, in order to put a stop to the pretensions of all false “traditionalism,” to specify that notably no political tendency existing in present-day Europe can validly recommend itself by the authority of traditional ideas or doctrines, principles being equally lacking everywhere, although assuredly one has never spoken so much of “principles” as one does today on all sides, applying this designation almost indiscriminately to everything that merits it least, and sometimes even to what on the

contrary implies the negation of all true principle.

Under this other abuse of a word, we moreover again find this character of “counterfeit” that we have already observed, in a general way, with regard to the traditional idea, and which appears to us to constitute by itself a “mark” sufficiently important and sufficiently significant that it is not without interest to insist upon it more particularly in a forthcoming article, which will at the same time provide us with the opportunity to put the “traditionalists” even more explicitly on guard against some of the multiple dangers of deviation to which their efforts are exposed.

For the moment, there remains for us still, because of certain malevolent or ill-intentioned persons whom we know all too well, to take a precaution that should normally be entirely superfluous: namely, to declare expressly that what we have just said in the last place cannot in any way or to any degree be regarded as constituting, on our part, a sort of more or less disguised incursion into the domain of politics; it is, on the contrary, the very expression of one of the principal reasons for which we intend to remain absolutely foreign to everything that touches upon that domain. We wish to say nothing more or other than what we say; what we wish to say, we have the habit of saying clearly, perhaps even too clearly for the taste of some; and no one has the right to claim to see in it the slightest “hidden meaning,” nor to add to it, by attributing them to us, his own interpretations more or less tendentious.

SYMBOLIC WEAPONS

In our article on Symbolic Flowers[1] we were led to make reference to the lance which, in the legend of the Grail, appears as a symbol complementary to the cup, and which is one of the numerous figures of the "Axis of the World"[2]. At the same time, this lance is also, we said, a symbol of the "Celestial Ray," and, according to the considerations that we have developed elsewhere[3], it is evident that these two meanings coincide at bottom; but this also explains that the lance, as well as the sword and the arrow which are in sum its equivalents, is sometimes assimilated to the solar ray. It is well understood that the polar and solar symbolisms must never be confused, and that, as we have often indicated, the former has a more fundamental and truly "primordial" character; but it is nonetheless true that what one might call the "transfers" from one to the other constitute a frequent fact, and one that is not without reasons that we shall perhaps seek to explain more clearly on some other occasion. For the moment, we shall confine ourselves to mentioning more particularly, in this regard, the attribution of the arrow to Apollo: it is known that, notably, it is with his arrows that he kills the serpent Python, just as, in the Vedic tradition, Indra kills Ahi or Vritra, the counterpart of Python, with the vajra which represents lightning; and this comparison leaves no doubt as to the original symbolic equivalence of the two weapons in question. We shall also recall the "golden arrow" of Abaris or of Zalmoxis, of which mention is made in the history of Pythagoras; and here one sees even more clearly that this symbolism refers expressly to Hyperborean Apollo, which precisely establishes the link between his solar aspect and his polar aspect[4].

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1 See the April 1936 issue.

2 In this respect, the complementarity of the lance and the cup is strictly comparable to that of the mountain and the cave, on which we shall no doubt return one day.

3 See The Symbolism of the Cross.

4 We note in passing, in this regard, that the "golden thigh" of Pythagoras, which makes him appear in a way as a manifestation of Hyperborean Apollo himself, relates to the symbolism of the polar mountain and to that of the Great Bear. On the other hand, the serpent Python is in special connection with Delphi, formerly called Pytho, sanctuary of Hyperborean Apollo; hence the designation of the Pythia, and also the very name of Pythagoras, which is in reality a name of Apollo, "he who leads the Pythia," that is to say, the inspirer of her oracles.

If we return to the consideration of the various weapons as representing the "Axis of the World," an important remark imposes itself: namely, that these weapons are, not always, but at least very often, either double-edged or with two opposed points. This latter case, which is more particularly that of the vajra, to which we shall have to return, must manifestly be related to the duality of the poles, considered as the two extremities of the axis, with all the correspondences that it implies and that we have already indicated in a previous article[5]. As for double-edged weapons, since the duality is there marked in the very direction of the axis, one must see in them a more direct allusion to the two currents that are represented elsewhere by the two serpents coiled around the staff or the caduceus; but since these two inverse currents are themselves respectively in relation with the two poles and the two hemispheres, one sees immediately from this that the two symbolisms in reality coincide. At bottom, it is always a matter of a double force, of a single essence in itself, but of apparently opposed effects in its manifestation, as a result of the "polarization" that conditions this manifestation, just as it conditions, moreover, at different levels, all the degrees and all the modes of universal manifestation[6].

The sword may itself be regarded, in a general way, as a double-edged weapon[7]; but an even more striking example is that of the double axe, which belongs notably to Aegean and Cretan symbolism, that is to say pre-Hellenic, but which is not exclusively proper to it. Now the axe, as we have explained elsewhere[8], is very especially a symbol of lightning, and thus, in this respect, a strict equivalent of the vajra; and the comparison of these two weapons thus clearly shows the fundamental identity of the two forms of symbolism that we have mentioned, that of

5 The Double Spiral (May 1936).

6 This amounts to saying that all cosmic dualities are in reality only various "specifications" of the primordial duality of Purusha and Prakriti, or, in other terms, of the polarization of Being into "essence" and "substance."

7 In another of its meanings, the sword is a symbol of the Word or of Speech with its double creative and destructive power (see for example Apocalypse I, 16 and XIX, 15); it is moreover evident that this double power is analogous to the double force of which we have just spoken, or, more exactly still, that these are only different applications of one and the same thing. With regard to the sword, let us also note that, according to certain ancient historians, the Scythians represented the Divinity by a sword planted in the ground at the summit of a mound; the latter being a reduced image of the mountain, one finds here united two of the symbols of the "Axis of the World.".

8 Thunderstones (May 1929).

double-edged weapons and that of weapons with two points[9].

The representations of the vajra offer multiple variants; Mr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has pointed out[10] that the most usual form, presenting a triple point at each of its extremities, is thereby closely related to the trishūla or trident, another very important symbolic weapon, but the special study of which would take us too far from our subject; we shall merely note that, whereas the median point is the termination of the axis itself, the two lateral points can again be related to the currents of right and left of which we have spoken, and that, for this very reason, a similar triplicity is found elsewhere in "axial" symbolism, for example in certain figurations of the "World Tree"[11].

Mr. Coomaraswamy has also shown that the vajra is traditionally assimilated to other known symbols of the "Axis of the World," such as the axle of the chariot, whose two wheels correspond to Heaven and Earth, which moreover explains in particular certain representations of the vajra as "supported" by a lotus upon which it is placed vertically. As for the quadruple vajra, formed by the union of two ordinary vajras arranged in the form of a cross, if one considers it as placed in a horizontal plane, which is suggested by its designation as karma-vajra, it is very close to symbols such as the swastika and the chakra[12]; we shall content ourselves with noting here these various indications, to which we shall perhaps have occasion to return in other studies, for this subject is one of those that one could not claim to exhaust.

The vajra, besides the meaning of "lightning," also has at the same time that of "diamond," which immediately evokes the ideas of indivisibility,

9 The mallet or hammer of Thor, another symbol of lightning that we also noted in the same article, presents, by its T-shaped form, an exact similarity with the double axe. — We shall also remark that, like the mallet and the sword, although less conspicuously than these, the axe is still found today in Masonic symbolism.

10 *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*

11 In this case, the double triplicity of the branches and the roots recalls even more exactly that of the two extremities of the vajra. — It is known moreover that, as an attribute of Shiva, the trishūla is often related to "triple time" (trikāla), that is to say to the three modalities of time as past, present, and future; there would here again be comparisons to be made with what is found in this regard in other traditions, for example with certain aspects of the symbolism of Janus.

12 It is therefore no longer a question here of the vertical axis as previously, but of the two horizontal axes of the geometric representation that we expounded in The Symbolism of the Cross

inalterability, and immutability; and, in fact, immutability is indeed the essential character of the axis around which the revolution of all things is effected, and which itself does not participate in it. In this regard, there is yet another very remarkable comparison: Plato describes precisely the "Axis of the World" as a luminous axis of diamond; this axis is surrounded by several concentric sheaths, of diverse dimensions and colors, corresponding to the different planetary spheres, and moving around it[13]. On the other hand, the Buddhist symbolism of the "diamond throne," situated at the foot of the "Tree of Wisdom" and at the very center of the "Wheel of the World," that is to say at the unique point that always remains immobile, is no less significant under the same aspect.

To return to lightning, it is considered, as we have indicated elsewhere[14], as representing a double power of production and destruction; one may say, if one wishes, a power of life and death, but, if one were to understand it solely in the literal sense, this would still be only a particular application of what is in reality at issue[15]. In fact, it is the force that produces all "condensations" and "dissipations," which Far-Eastern tradition relates to the alternating action of the two complementary principles yin and yang, and which likewise correspond to the two phases of universal "expiration" and "aspiration"[16]; this is what Hermetic doctrine, for its part, calls "coagulation" and "solution"[17]; and the double action of this force is symbolized by the two opposed extremities of the vajra, insofar as it is a "fulgurant" weapon, while the diamond clearly represents its unique and indivisible essence.

We shall note incidentally, by way of curiosity, since this can scarcely be more than that from our point of view, an application of a very inferior order, but which is directly connected with the question of

13 Republic, Book X (Myth of Er the Armenian). — This ensemble of sheaths constitutes the "Spindle of Necessity"; the Fate Clotho causes it to turn.

14 See our article already mentioned on Thunderstones.

15 In connection with our earlier remarks about the respective weapons of Apollo and Indra, itmay be noted that like the thunderbolt, the solar ray is also considered as vivifying or deadly as the case may be. Let us also recall that the lance of the Grail legend as well as the lance of Achilles, to which we have already compared it in this connection, had the double power of inflicting wounds and of healing them.

16 See our article The Double Spiral (May 1936).

17 It is also what the ancient Greek philosophers termed 'generation' and 'corruption'.

symbolic weapons: the "power of points," well known in magic and even in profane physics, really relates to "solution," that is to say to the second aspect of the double power of which we have just spoken. On the other hand, a correspondence of the first aspect, or of "coagulation," is found in the magical use of knots or "bindings"; we shall also recall in this regard the symbolism of the "Gordian knot," which Alexander moreover cuts with his sword, which is again quite significant; but here another question appears, that of the "vital knot," which, although in analogical relation with the preceding, goes far beyond the domain and the scope of simple magic[18].

Finally, we must mention another "axial" symbol, which is not a weapon properly speaking, but which is nevertheless assimilated to one by its form terminating in a point: this symbol is that of the nail; and among the Romans, the nail (clavus) and the key (clavis), which their language brought together in a rather singular manner, were both related to the symbolism of Janus[19]. With the key, which is also an "axial" symbol, we would be led to other considerations into which we do not wish to enter at present; we shall only say that the "power of the keys," or the double power of "binding" and "loosing"[20], is not truly different from that of which we have spoken: at bottom, it is always a matter of "coagulation" and "solution," in the Hermetic sense of these two terms, that is in reality involved.

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18 We made allusion to this question, with regard to the "sensitive point" of cathedrals, in a note entitled Cologne or Strasbourg? (January 1927).

19 We shall also recall, to complete the remark we have just made, the magical power attributed to each of these two objects, which, apart from any question of "phenomenological" order, appears as a sort of exoteric degeneration of their traditional meaning.

20 One may remark that these words themselves also have an evident relation with the symbolism of bindings or knots; all this is therefore very closely connected, and the various forms assumed by symbolism are always perfectly coherent among themselves.

November 1936

THE COUNTERFEITS OF THE TRADITIONAL IDEA

In our last article, we drew attention to the character of "counterfeiting" implied by the abuse that is made, in our time, of certain words such as those of "principles," "tradition," "religion," and many others besides—an abuse unconscious in the great majority of cases, assuredly, but which nonetheless corresponds quite clearly to the designs of subversion of all normal order according to which the entire present mentality is directed. One could even say that this character is found, in a much more general way and under multiple forms, in the whole ensemble of what properly constitutes modern civilization, where, whatever point of view one adopts, everything appears more and more artificial, denatured, and falsified; many of those who today criticize this civilization are moreover struck by this fact, even when they do not know how to go further and have not the least suspicion of what is really hidden behind all this. It would nevertheless suffice, it seems to us, to have a little logic in order to say to oneself that, if everything has thus become artificial, the mentality itself to which this state of things corresponds must be no less so than the rest, that it too must be "manufactured" and not spontaneous; and, as soon as one had made this simple reflection, one could no longer fail to see concordant indications in this sense multiplying on all sides and almost indefinitely; but it must be believed that it is unfortunately very difficult to escape so completely from the "suggestions" to which we have alluded, and to which, in the final analysis, the modern world as such owes its existence.

We also said that this character of "counterfeiting" constitutes, by itself, a very significant "mark" as regards the real origin of that which is affected by it, and consequently of the modern deviation as a whole,

whose truly “satanic” nature it brings clearly to light. We have already explained ourselves sufficiently, on other occasions, as to the sense that we intend to attach to this last word, so that there can be no equivocation here: it applies, in sum, to everything that is negation and reversal of order, in whatever domain this may be, and it is indeed this, without the least doubt, whose effects we can observe around us. But, at the same time, one must not forget that this spirit of negation is also, and in a way by necessity, the spirit of falsehood; it assumes all disguises, and often the most unexpected ones, in order not to be recognized for what it is, even in order to pass itself off as quite the contrary, and it is here precisely that the “counterfeit” appears; do we not in fact say that “Satan is the ape of God,” and also that “he transforms himself into an angel of light”? This amounts to saying that he imitates in his own way, by altering it and falsifying it so as always to make it serve his ends, that very thing to which he wishes to oppose himself: thus he will arrange matters so that disorder takes on the appearance of a false order, he will conceal the negation of all principle beneath the affirmation of false principles, and so on. Naturally, all this, at bottom, can never be anything but simulacrum and even caricature, but presented with sufficient skill for the immense majority of men to allow themselves to be deceived by it; and how could one be astonished at this when one sees how easily even crude impostures succeed in imposing themselves on the crowd, and how difficult, on the contrary, it is afterwards to undeceive it? “Vulgus vult decipi,” already said the ancients; and there have no doubt always been people, although never so numerous as in our day, disposed to add: “ergo decipiatur”!

Nevertheless, whoever says counterfeiting says thereby parody; these two are almost synonyms; thus there is invariably, in all things of this kind, a grotesque element that may be more or less apparent, but which, in any case, ought not to escape observers who are at all perspicacious, if indeed the “suggestions” that they unconsciously undergo did not abolish their natural perspicacity in this respect. It is by this side that falsehood, however skilful it may be, cannot help but betray itself; and, of course, this too is a “mark” of origin, inseparable from counterfeiting itself, and which should normally allow it to be recognized as such. If

one wished to cite here examples taken from the various manifestations of the modern spirit, one would assuredly have only the embarrassment of choice, from the pseudo-"civic" and "secular" rites that have taken on such extension everywhere in recent years, and which aim to provide the masses with a purely human substitute for true religious rites, to the extravagances of a so-called "naturism" which, despite its name, is no less artificial, not to say "anti-natural," than the useless complications of existence against which it claims to react by a derisory comedy whose true purpose is moreover to make people believe that the "state of nature" is identical with animality; and there is not even the simplest repose of the human being that is not now threatened with denaturation by the contradictory idea, but one conforming to democratic egalitarianism, of an "organization of leisure"! We mention here, deliberately, facts that are known to everyone, that unquestionably belong to what may be called the "public domain," and that everyone can therefore observe without difficulty; is it not incredible that those who feel in them, we do not say the danger, but simply the ridiculous, are so rare that they represent true exceptions?

"Pseudo-religion," one ought to say in this connection, "pseudo-nature," "pseudo-repose," and so on for so many other things; if one wished always to speak strictly according to the truth, one would have to place constantly this word "pseudo" before the designation of all the specific products of the modern world, in order to indicate what they really are: falsifications and nothing else, and falsifications whose purpose is only too evident for those who are still capable of reflecting.

Whatever may otherwise be the more particular idea that each person may form of what is called "Satan," according to certain theological or other views, this can change nothing in what we have just said, for it is quite clear that "personifications" do not matter here and have no place whatsoever in these considerations. What is to be envisaged is, on the one hand, this spirit of negation that we have defined and into which "Satan" is resolved metaphysically, independently of the special forms that he may assume in order to manifest himself in this or that domain; and, on the other hand, that which properly represents him and

“incarnates” him, so to speak, in the terrestrial world where we consider his action, and which is nothing other than what we have called “counter-initiation.” It must be remarked that we say “counter-initiation,” and not “pseudo-initiation”; in fact, one must not confuse the counterfeiter with the counterfeit, of which “pseudo-initiation” is in sum only one of the multiple examples, in the same way as those that we have just indicated in different orders, although it perhaps presents, as a counterfeiting of initiation, a more special importance, from the point of view in which we are placing ourselves, than the counterfeiting of anything else whatsoever. In sum, “pseudo-initiation” is really only one of the products of the state of disorder and confusion brought about, in the modern epoch, by the “satanic” action that has its conscious point of departure in the “counter-initiation”; it can also be, in an unconscious way, an instrument of the latter, but, at bottom, this is likewise true, to one degree or another, of all the other counterfeits, in the sense that they are all so many means aiding the realization of the same plan of subversion, so that each plays exactly the role assigned to it within this ensemble, which moreover constitutes yet another kind of counterfeiting of order and harmony themselves, against which the whole of this plan is directed.

The “counter-initiation,” for its part, is certainly not a counterfeit, but on the contrary something very real in its own order, as the action that it effectively exercises shows all too well, and something that claims to oppose true initiation, not to imitate it; this claim, moreover, is necessarily illusory, as we have already explained, since the spiritual domain is absolutely forbidden to it, and since it cannot in any case go beyond the “intermediate world,” that is to say the psychic domain, which is besides, in all respects, the privileged field of influence of “Satan” in the human order; but the intention nonetheless exists, together with the deliberate resolve that it implies to go properly in the opposite direction to initiation. As for “pseudo-initiation,” it is only one of those parodies of which we spoke earlier, which amounts to saying that it is nothing in itself, that it is empty of all profound reality, or, if one prefers, that its intrinsic value is neither positive like that of initiation, nor negative like that of “counter-initiation,” but simply null;

if, however, it does not reduce itself to a more or less harmless game, as one might perhaps be tempted to believe under these conditions, this is because of what we have just explained, in a completely general way, concerning the true character of counterfeits and the role for which they are destined; and one must add further, in this special case, that rites, by virtue of their nature "sacred" in the strictest sense of the word, are something that it is never possible to simulate with impunity.

We thus return to the more precise question of "pseudo-traditional" counterfeits and of what gives them their quite particular gravity, a gravity that evidently reaches its maximum when these counterfeits attack the "interior" side of tradition, that which constitutes its very spirit, that is to say the esoteric or initiatic domain. One may remark that the "counter-initiation" applies itself to introducing its agents into "pseudo-initiatic" organizations, which they thus "inspire" without the knowledge of their ordinary members, and even, most often, of their apparent leaders, who are no less unconscious than the others of what they really serve; but it must be said that, in fact, it also introduces them, in a similar way, wherever it can, for example into those political or other "movements" to which we have alluded previously, and even into authentically initiatic or religious organizations, but where the traditional spirit is too weakened for them still to be capable of resisting this insidious penetration. However, apart from this last case, which allows the exercise of a directly dissolving action, that of "pseudo-initiatic" organizations is no doubt the one that must especially hold the attention of the "counter-initiation" and be the object of more particular efforts on its part, precisely because the work it sets itself is above all anti-traditional, and because indeed it is to this alone that it ultimately reduces itself entirely. It is moreover very probably for this reason that there exist multiple links between "pseudo-initiatic" manifestations and all sorts of other things that, at first sight, would seem to have no relation with them, but which all represent the modern spirit under one or another of its most accentuated aspects; for why indeed, if this were not so, would the "pseudo-initiates" constantly play in all this so important a role?

One could say that, among the instruments or means of every kind put into operation for what is at issue, “pseudo-initiation,” by its very nature, must logically occupy the foremost rank; it is only a cog, of course, but a cog that can command many others, into which these others engage, as it were, and from which they receive their impulse. Here, counterfeiting is pursued still further: “pseudo-initiation” imitates in this the function of invisible motor which, in the normal order, properly belongs to initiation; but let one beware: initiation truly and legitimately represents the spirit, the principial animator of all things, whereas, as far as “pseudo-initiation” is concerned, the spirit is obviously absent. It follows immediately from this that the action thus exercised, instead of being really “organic,” can only have a purely “mechanical” character, which moreover fully justifies the comparison of cogwheels that we have just employed; and is not this character precisely also that which is found everywhere, and in the most striking way, in the modern world, where the machine invades everything more and more, where the human being himself is reduced, in all his activity, to resembling as much as possible an automaton, because all spirituality has been taken away from him? But it is indeed here that the whole inferiority of artificial productions bursts forth, even if a “satanic” skill presided over their elaboration: one can indeed manufacture machines, but not living beings, because, once again, it is the spirit itself that makes and will always make default.

We spoke of an “invisible motor,” and, apart from the will to imitation that manifests itself again from this point of view, there is in this sort of “invisibility,” however relative it may be, an incontestable advantage of “pseudo-initiation,” for the role that we have just described, over anything else of a more “public” character. It is not that “pseudo-initiatic” organizations, for the most part, take great care to conceal their existence; some even go so far as to engage in propaganda perfectly incompatible with their pretensions to esoterism; but, despite this, they are still what is least apparent and what lends itself best to the exercise of a “discreet” action, consequently that with which the “counter-initiation” can enter most directly into contact without having to fear that its intervention risks being unmasked, all the more so since, in these

milieus, it is always easy to find some means of warding off the consequences of an indiscretion or an imprudence. It must also be said that a great part of the public, while knowing more or less of the existence of "pseudo-initiatic" organizations, does not really know what they are and is little disposed to attach importance to them, seeing in them only simple "eccentricities" without serious bearing; and this indifference serves the same designs, albeit involuntarily, just as much as could a more rigorous secrecy.

We have sought to make understood, as exactly as possible, the real, although unconscious, role of "pseudo-initiation," and the true nature of its relations with the "counter-initiation"; one would still have to add that the latter can, at least in certain cases, find in it a milieu of observation and selection for its own recruitment, but this is not the place to insist upon that. What cannot even be given an approximately adequate idea of is the incredible multiplicity and complexity of the ramifications that in fact exist among all these things, and of which only their direct and detailed study could allow one to become aware; but it is well understood that here it is above all the "principle," so to speak, that interests us. However, this is not yet all: up to this point, we have seen in sum why the traditional idea is counterfeited by "pseudo-initiation"; it remains for us now to see more precisely how it is so, and this is what we shall examine in the second part of this study.

(*To be continued*)

THE SYMBOLISM OF HORNS

In his recent study on Celtism, our collaborator Basilide pointed out the importance of Apollo Karneios as the god of the Hyperboreans; the Celtic name Belen is moreover identical with Ablun or Aplun, which among the Greeks became Apollo. We propose to return one day in a more complete manner to the question of the Hyperborean Apollo; for the moment, we shall confine ourselves to a few considerations concerning more especially the name Karneios, as well as that of Kronos with which it is in close relation, since these two names have the same root KRN, which essentially expresses the ideas of "power" and of "elevation".

In the sense of "elevation," the name Kronos suits Saturn perfectly, which in fact corresponds to the highest of the planetary spheres, the "seventh heaven" or the Satya-Loka of the Hindu tradition[1]. One must not moreover regard Saturn as being uniquely, or even primarily, a malefic power, as one sometimes seems inclined to do, for one must not forget that he is above all the regent of the "Golden Age," that is to say of the Satya-Yuga or of the first phase of the Manvantara, which coincides precisely with the Hyperborean period; this clearly shows that it is not without reason that Kronos is identified with the god of the Hyperboreans[2]. It is moreover likely that the malefic aspect results here from the very disappearance of this Hyperborean world; it is by virtue of an analogous "reversal" that every "Land of the Gods," seat of a spiritual center, becomes a "Land of the Dead" when this center has disappeared. It is also possible that this aspect was later concentrated more readily upon the name Kronos, while the beneficent aspect remained, on the contrary, attached to the name Karneios, by reason

1 For the Pythagoreans, Kronos and Rhea represented respectively Heaven and Earth; the idea of elevation is thus also found in this correspondence. — It is only by a more or less late phonetic assimilation that the Greeks identified Kronos or Saturn with Chronos, Time, whereas the roots of these two words are in reality different; it seems that the symbol of the sickle was then also transferred from the one to the other, but this does not enter into our present subject.

2 The sea that surrounded the island of Ogygia, consecrated to Karneios and to Kronos, was called the Cronian Sea (Plutarch, De facie in orbe Lunae). Ogygia, which Homer calls the "navel of the world" (later represented by the Omphalos of Delphi), was moreover only a secondary center having replaced the primitive Thule or Syria at a period much closer to us than the Hyperborean period.

of the doubling of these names which originally are but one; and it is true as well that the symbolism of the Sun itself presents two opposed aspects, vivifying and deadly, productive and destructive, as we have remarked recently with regard to weapons representing the "solar ray"[3].

Karneios is the god of the karn, that is to say of the "high place" symbolizing the Sacred Mountain of the Pole, and which was represented among the Celts either by the tumulus, or by the cairn or heap of stones which has preserved this name. The stone is moreover often in direct relation with the cult of Apollo, as one sees notably by the Omphalos of Delphi, and also by the stone cube that served as altar at Delos, and whose oracle ordered the doubling of its volume; but, on the other hand, the stone also had a particular relation with Kronos; here there is a new parallel that we can only indicate in passing, for this point would deserve to be treated separately[4].

At the same time, Karneios is also, by the very meaning of his name, the "powerful god"[5]; and if the mountain is, under one of its aspects, a symbol of power as well as of elevation, by reason of the idea of stability that is attached to it, there is another symbol that is still more characteristic from this point of view, and that is that of horns. Now there was at Delos, besides the cubic stone that we have just mentioned, another altar called the Keraton, which was entirely formed of the horns of oxen and goats solidly assembled; it is evident that this refers directly to Karneios, whose symbolic relation with horned beasts has even left traces down to our own day[6].

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3 In Greek, the very form of the name Apollo is very close to that of Apollyon, the "destroyer" (cf. Apocalypse IX, 11).

4 One rather generally attributes to the bétyles, which are assimilable to the Omphalos, a "solar" signification; but this must, at a certain period, have been superposed upon a primitive "polar" signification, and it may be that it was thus also for Apollo himself. — Let us note further that Apollo is represented as the protector of springs (the Celtic Borvo was assimilated to him in this respect); and springs are also in relation with the mountain, or with the stone that is its equivalent in "polar" symbolism.

5 This name thus corresponds, in Hebrew, to the divine name Shaddai, which must be more particularly the name of the God of Abraham; now there are again, between Abraham and Kronos, rather remarkable relations that we shall perhaps explain one day.

6 In Brittany, Saint Cornély, substituted for Apollo Karneios, is regarded as the protector of horned beasts; the considerations that we set forth here will allow one to understand that there is there, in reality, much more than the simple "play on words" that some might perhaps be tempted to see in it.

The very name of the horn is moreover manifestly related to the root KRN, as well as that of the crown, which is another symbolic expression of the same ideas, for these two words (in Latin cornu and corona) are very close to one another[7]. It is too evident that the crown is the insignia of power and the mark of an elevated rank for it to be necessary to insist upon it; and we find a first parallel with the horns in the fact that the former and the latter are equally placed on the head, which clearly gives the idea of a "summit"[8]. However, there is yet something else: the crown was originally a circle adorned with points in the form of rays; and horns are likewise regarded as representing luminous rays[9], which brings us back to certain considerations that we have already set forth with regard to symbolic weapons. It is quite clear, moreover, that horns can be assimilated to weapons, even in the most literal sense, and it is also by this that an idea of force or power could be attached to them, as in fact it has been everywhere and always[10]. On the other hand, luminous rays are well suited as attributes of power, whether this be, according to cases, sacerdotal or royal, that is to say spiritual or temporal, for they designate it as an emanation or a delegation of the very source of light, which it indeed is when it is legitimate.

One could easily give multiple examples, from very diverse sources, of horns employed as a symbol of power; they are found notably in the Bible, and more especially still in the Apocalypse[11]; we shall cite

7 The Greek word Keraunos, which designates lightning, seems indeed also to be derived from the same root; let us remark in this connection that lightning ordinarily strikes summits, places, or elevated objects; and one must also take into account the analogy of lightning with the luminous ray, to which we shall have to return.

8 In the Hebrew tradition, Kether or the "Crown" occupies the summit of the Sephirothic Tree.

9 One can find a particularly striking example of this in representations of Moses, for it is known that the appearances of horns that he bears on his forehead are nothing other than luminous rays. Some, among them Huet, Bishop of Avranches, have wished to identify Moses with Dionysos, who is also represented with horns; there would moreover be other curious relations to envisage, but this would take us too far from our subject.

10 The same assimilation is naturally valid also for other animal weapons, such as the tusks of the elephant and of the boar, whose pointed form is moreover similar to that of horns. — Let us add, however, that the duality of horns (and also of tusks) prevents "axial" symbolism from being applicable to them: they are assimilated rather, in this respect, to the two lateral points of the trishūla; and this is also why we speak here of luminous rays in general, and not of the "Celestial Ray," which is, from the double macrocosmic and microcosmic point of view, an equivalent of the "Axis of the World."

11 It must be remarked that here the idea is no longer only that of a legitimate power, but is extended to any power whatsoever, which may be malefic as well as beneficent: there are the horns of the Lamb, but also the horns of the Beast.

another, taken from the Arabic tradition, which designates Alexander under the name of El-Iskandar dhûl-qarnein, that is to say "the one with two horns"[12], which is most commonly interpreted in the sense of a double power extending over the East and over the West[13]. This interpretation is perfectly correct, while not excluding another fact that rather completes it: Alexander, having been declared son of Ammon by the oracle of this god, took as his emblem the two ram's horns which were the principal attribute of the latter[14]; and this divine origin moreover only legitimized him as successor of the ancient sovereigns of Egypt, to whom it was likewise attributed. It is even said that he had himself represented thus on his coins, which, moreover, in the eyes of the Greeks, rather identified him with Dionysos, whose memory he also evoked by his conquests, especially that of India; and Dionysos was the son of Zeus, whom the Greeks assimilated to Ammon; it is possible that this idea was not foreign either to Alexander himself; but, however, Dionysos was ordinarily represented with horns, not of the ram, but of the bull, which constitutes, from the point of view of symbolism, a fairly important difference[15].

It is appropriate indeed to remark that horns, in their symbolic usage, assume two principal forms: that of ram's horns, which is properly "solar," and that of bull's horns, which on the contrary is "lunar," moreover recalling the very form of the crescent To this distinction corresponds that of the two forms that alchemists give to the sign of mercury: the lunar form is here related to vulgar mercury, and the solar form to the mercury of the sages.. One could also, in this regard, refer to the respective correspondences of the two zodiacal signs of Aries and Taurus; but this would give rise above all, through the application that could be made of it to the predominance of one or the other form in different traditions, to "cyclical" considerations into which we cannot

12 The Arabic word qarn is the same as "horn," the root KRN easily changing into QRN and also into HRN, as in the English horn. — This word qarn also has another meaning, that of "age" or "cycle," and most commonly of "century"; this double meaning sometimes gives rise to a curious misunderstanding, some believing that the epithet dhûl-qarnein applied to Alexander means that he lived two centuries.

13 In this respect, the two horns are an equivalent of the two heads of the heraldic eagle.

14 Ammon himself was called "Master of the double horn" (Book of the Dead, ch. CLXV).

15 It is also possible that Alexander wore a helmet adorned with two horns; it is known that horned helmets were in use among many ancient peoples. — Among the Assyro-Babylonians, the horned tiara was a characteristic attribute of divinities.

think of entering at present.

To conclude this overview, we shall note only one more parallel, under certain aspects, between these animal weapons that are horns and what may be called vegetal weapons, that is to say thorns. It is to be noted, in this respect, that many plants that play an important symbolic role are thorny plants[16]; here again, thorns, like other points, evoke the idea of a summit or an elevation, and they can also, in certain cases at least, be taken to represent luminous rays[17]. One thus sees that symbolism is always perfectly coherent, as it must moreover necessarily be, by the very fact that it is not the result of some more or less artificial convention, but that it is on the contrary founded essentially upon the very nature of things.

16 One may give as examples the rose, the thistle, the acacia, the acanthus, etc.

17 The Christian symbolism of the crown of thorns (which is said to be made of acacia thorns) is thus connected, in a way that some may perhaps find unexpected, but which is nonetheless real and exact, with the crown of rays of which we spoke above. — It should also be noted that, in various regions, menhirs are designated by the name of "thorns" (hence, in Brittany and elsewhere, place-names such as La Belle-Épine, Notre-Dame-de-l'Épine, etc.); now the symbolism of the menhir, like that of the obelisk and of the column, relates to the "solar ray" at the same time as to the "Axis of the World."

December 1936

THE COUNTERFEITS OF THE TRADITIONAL IDEA

(continued)[1]

One of the simplest pseudo-initiatic means that organizations have at their disposal in order to fabricate a false tradition for the use of their adherents is assuredly "syncretism," which consists, as we have already explained on another occasion, in assembling as best one can elements borrowed from here and there, in juxtaposing them in a manner of speaking "from the outside," without any real understanding of what they truly represent in the diverse traditions to which they properly belong. As it is nevertheless necessary to give this more or less shapeless assemblage a certain appearance of unity, so as to be able to present it as a "doctrine," one will endeavor to group these elements around a few "guiding ideas" which, for their part, will not be of traditional origin, but, on the contrary, will generally be entirely profane and modern conceptions, thus properly anti-traditional; the idea of "evolution," in particular, almost always plays in this respect a preponderant role. It is easy to understand that, by this fact, things are singularly aggravated: it is no longer simply, under these conditions, a matter of the constitution of a sort of "mosaic" of traditional fragments, which could, in sum, be nothing but a completely vain, though more or less inoffensive, game; it is a matter of denaturation and, one might say, of "diversion" of the elements borrowed, since one will thus be led to attribute to them a meaning that will be altered so as to accord with the "guiding idea," even to the point of going directly against the traditional meaning.

It is moreover well understood, according to all that we have already explained, that those who act thus may not be clearly conscious of it; in

all this, one must always first take into account pure and simple incomprehension, and then, we should even say above all, the "suggestions" of which we have spoken, and of which these "pseudo-initiates" may very well themselves be the first victims, before contributing in their turn to inculcate them in others; but this unconsciousness changes nothing in the result and in no way attenuates the danger of such things, which are none the less suited to serve, even if only "after the fact," the ends proposed by the "counter-initiation." We reserve here the case in which agents of the latter might have, by a more or less direct intervention, provoked or inspired the formation of such "pseudo-traditions"; one could doubtless find a few examples of this as well, which does not mean that, even then, these conscious agents would have been the apparent and known creators of the "pseudo-initiatic" forms in question, for it is evident that prudence commands them to conceal themselves as much as possible behind simple unconscious instruments.

When we speak of unconsciousness, we mean it above all in the sense that those who thus elaborate a "pseudo-tradition" are, most often, perfectly ignorant of what it really serves; as for the character and the value of such a production, it is more difficult to admit that their good faith is equally complete, and yet, here again, it is possible that they deceive themselves to a certain extent, or that they are deceived in the case that we have just mentioned last. One must also, quite often, take account of certain "anomalies" of a psychic order that complicate things still further, and which, moreover, constitute a terrain particularly favorable for influences and suggestions of every kind to be exercised with the maximum of power; we shall merely note in this regard, without insisting further, the not negligible role that "clairvoyants" and other "sensitives" have frequently played in all this.

But, despite everything, there is almost always a point at which conscious imposture and charlatanism become, for the leaders of a "pseudo-initiatic" organization, a kind of necessity: thus, if someone comes to perceive, which is not very difficult in sum, the borrowings that they have made from this or that tradition, how could they

acknowledge them without thereby being obliged to admit that they are in reality nothing but simple profanes? In such cases, they ordinarily do not hesitate to reverse the relations and to declare audaciously that it is their own "tradition" that represents the common "source" of all those that they have plundered; and, if they do not succeed in convincing everyone of this, there are at least always naïve people who believe them at their word, in sufficient number for their position as "heads of a school," to which they generally cling above all else, not to risk being seriously compromised, all the more so as they pay little attention to the quality of their "disciples" and consider quantity far more important, which would moreover suffice to show how far removed they are from having even the most elementary notion of what esoterism and initiation really are.

We hardly need say that everything we describe here does not correspond merely to more or less hypothetical possibilities, but indeed to real and duly established facts; if we were to cite them all, our exposition would be prolonged almost indefinitely, and in a manner of little usefulness at bottom; a few characteristic examples suffice. Thus it is by the "syncretic" procedure of which we have just spoken that one saw constituted a so-called "Eastern tradition," that of the Theosophists, having scarcely anything Eastern about it except a terminology badly understood and badly applied; and, as this world is always "divided against itself," according to the evangelical saying, French occultists, out of a spirit of opposition and "competition," in their turn constructed a so-called "Western tradition" of the same kind, many elements of which, notably those drawn from the Kabbalah, can with difficulty be said to be Western as to their origin, if not as to the special manner in which they interpreted them. The former presented their "tradition" as the very expression of "ancient wisdom"; the latter, perhaps a little more modest in their pretensions, sought above all to pass their "syncretism" off as a "synthesis," for there are few who have abused this latter word as much as they. If the former thus showed themselves more ambitious, it is perhaps because, in fact, there were at the origin of their "movement" influences sufficiently enigmatic, and whose true nature they themselves would doubtless have been quite incapable of

determining; as for the latter, they knew only too well that there was nothing behind them, that their work was truly only that of a few individualities reduced to their own means, and, if it nevertheless happened that “something” else was introduced there also, this was certainly only much later; it would not be very difficult to apply to these two cases, considered from this point of view, what we have said a moment ago, and we can leave to each the task of drawing for himself the consequences that may appear to him to follow logically from it.

Of course, there has never been anything that could authentically be called “Eastern tradition” or “Western tradition,” such designations being manifestly far too vague to be able to apply to a defined traditional form, since, unless one goes back to the primordial Tradition, which is here out of the question for reasons too easy to understand, and which moreover is neither Eastern nor Western, there are and have always been diverse and multiple traditional forms both in the East and in the West. Others thought to do better and to inspire confidence more easily by appropriating the very name of some tradition that had really existed at a more or less distant epoch, and by making it the label of a construction just as heterogeneous as the preceding ones; for, if they naturally make more or less use of what they may manage to know of the tradition on which they have fixed their choice, they are forced to complete these few data, always very fragmentary and often even partly hypothetical, by resorting to other elements borrowed elsewhere or even entirely imaginary. In all cases, the slightest examination of all these productions suffices to bring out the specifically modern spirit that presided over them, and which is invariably expressed by the presence of some of those same “guiding ideas” to which we have alluded above; it would therefore not be necessary to push researches further and to take the trouble to determine exactly and in detail the real provenance of this or that element of such an ensemble, since this sole observation already shows clearly enough, and without leaving room for the least doubt, that one is confronted with nothing other than a pure and simple counterfeit.

One of the best examples that can be given of this latter case is that of

the numerous organizations which, at the present time, call themselves "Rosicrucian," and which, as goes without saying, do not fail to be in contradiction with one another, and even to combat one another more or less openly, while claiming equally to be representatives of a single and even "traditional" tradition. In fact, we can entirely give reason to each of them, without a single exception, when it denounces its competitors as illegitimate and fraudulent; and it often happens that, in these disputes, all the more curious in that they occur in milieus where one does nothing but speak incessantly of "universal fraternity," there come to light documents truly edifying as to the account of one and another! Be that as it may, there have assuredly never been so many people claiming to be "Rosicrucians," if not even "Rose-Croix," as since there are no longer any authentic ones; we will even add that this phenomenon of "pseudo-Rosicrucianism" in reality constitutes one of the best proofs that these designations, as well as the special form to which they were attached, are no longer in use in any initiation that has preserved up to our days an effective existence. Indeed, if there were still some truly Rosicrucian organization, it would certainly have at its disposal the means necessary to reduce all these counterfeits to nothing, and without having need to resort to public denunciations for that purpose; but it is much less dangerous to pass oneself off as the continuation of something that belongs entirely to the past, especially when the denials are all the less to be feared because that of which it is a matter has always been, as is the case here, enveloped in a certain obscurity, so that its end is no more surely known than its origin; and who, among the profane public and even among the "pseudo-initiates," can know exactly what the tradition was which, during a certain period, qualified itself as Rosicrucian?

Similar remarks would also apply, let us say in passing, to the abuse that is currently made of names designating certain "personifications," and which were formerly employed by initiatic organizations; from the moment that this abuse is possible, one can conclude that legitimate usage has definitively ceased. On the other hand, this does not concern a case such as that of the so-called "Great White Lodge," of which, as we have remarked on various occasions, there is more and more frequent

talk on all sides, for this designation has never anywhere had the slightest authentically traditional character; if this conventional name can serve as a “mask” for something that has any reality whatsoever, it is certainly not, in any case, on the initiatic side that it should be sought.

One has quite often criticized the manner in which certain people relegate the “Masters” of whom they boast into some more or less inaccessible region of Central Asia or elsewhere: this is indeed a rather easy means of rendering their assertions unverifiable, but it is not the only one, and distance in time can, in this respect, play a role exactly comparable to that of distance in space. Thus others do not hesitate to claim to be attached to some tradition that disappeared centuries ago, or even thousands of years ago; it is true that, unless they dare to go so far as to affirm that this tradition has been perpetuated during all that time in so secret and so well-hidden a manner that no one other than themselves can discover the least trace of it, this deprives them of the appreciable advantage of claiming a direct and continuous filiation, which would here no longer even have the appearance of plausibility that it can still have when it is a matter of a form that is, all things considered, recent, as the Rosicrucian tradition is; but this defect seems to have only little importance in their eyes, for they are so ignorant of the true conditions of initiation that they readily imagine that a simple “ideal” attachment can take the place of an effective attachment; we have already sufficiently explained what this is worth, with regard to initiatic transmission, to have no need to insist again on this point. It is moreover quite clear that a tradition will lend itself all the more readily to all “fantastic reconstructions” insofar as it is more completely lost and forgotten, and insofar as one knows less what to adhere to concerning the real significance of the vestiges that subsist of it, and to which one can thus make say almost anything one wishes; each will naturally put into it only what conforms to his own ideas; doubtless there is no other reason than this to be sought in order to account for the fact that the Egyptian tradition is quite particularly “exploited” in this respect, and that so many “pseudo-initiates” of very diverse schools show it a predilection that could scarcely be understood otherwise.

We must specify, in order to avoid any false application of what we say here, that these remarks do not in any way concern references to Egypt or other things of the same kind that may sometimes also be encountered in certain initiatic organizations, but which there have solely the character of symbolic “legends,” without any pretension to claiming in fact such origins; we aim only at what presents itself as a restoration, valid as such, of a tradition or of an initiation that no longer exists, a restoration which moreover, even in the impossible hypothesis where it would be exact and complete in every respect, would still have no other interest in itself than that of a simple archaeological curiosity.

We shall stop these considerations here, for that suffices amply to make understood what are, in a general way, all these “pseudo-initiatic” counterfeits of the traditional idea: a more or less coherent mixture, rather less than more, of elements partly borrowed and partly invented, the whole being dominated by the anti-traditional conceptions that are proper to the modern spirit, and consequently being able in the end to serve only to spread these conceptions by making them pass for traditional, that is to say for everything that they are in reality not, without speaking of the deception that consists in giving as “initiation” what has only a purely profane character, not to say “profane.” If one were to remark after that, as a sort of attenuating circumstance, that there are almost always there, despite everything, some elements whose provenance is really traditional, we shall reply this: every imitation, in order to be accepted, must naturally take on at least some of the traits of that which it simulates, but this is precisely what further increases its danger; is not the most skillful and also the most fatal lie precisely that which mixes the true with the false in an inextricable manner, thus striving to make the former serve the triumph of the latter?

THE TOMB OF HERMES

What we say elsewhere about certain pseudo-initiatic undertakings, and also what we have already said last month concerning some recent books, may easily make understood the reasons why we are very little tempted to approach questions touching more or less directly upon the ancient Egyptian tradition. We may moreover add this: the very fact that present-day Egyptians are in no way concerned with researches relating to this disappeared civilization would suffice to show that there can be no effective benefit from it, from the point of view that interests us; if it were otherwise, indeed, it is quite evident that they would not have in some way abandoned the monopoly of it to foreigners, who moreover have never made anything more of it than a matter of simple erudition. The truth is that, between ancient Egypt and present-day Egypt, there is only a geographical coincidence, without the least historical continuity; thus the tradition in question is even more completely foreign, in the country where it formerly existed, than Druidism is for the peoples who today inhabit the ancient Celtic lands; and the fact that more numerous monuments subsist of it changes nothing in this state of affairs. We wish to make this point perfectly clear once and for all, in order to cut short all the illusions that those who have never had the opportunity to examine things closely too easily form in this respect; and, at the same time, this remark will still more completely destroy the pretensions of the "pseudo-initiates" who, while recommending themselves by ancient Egypt, would like to give it to be understood that they are attached to something that would subsist in Egypt itself; we moreover know that this is not a purely imaginary supposition, and that certain people, counting on general ignorance, in which they unfortunately are not entirely mistaken, effectively push their pretensions that far.

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, it happens that we find ourselves almost obliged to give, as far as possible, some explanations that have been requested of us from various sides in recent times, as a result of the incredible multiplication of certain fantastic stories of which we had to speak somewhat when reviewing the books to which we alluded a

moment ago. It must be said, moreover, that these explanations will not in reality relate to the Egyptian tradition itself, but only to what concerns it in the Arabic tradition; there are there at least, indeed, some rather curious indications, and which are perhaps capable, despite everything, of contributing to clarifying certain obscure points, although we do not in any way intend to exaggerate the importance of the conclusions that it is possible to draw from them.

We previously remarked that, in fact, one does not really know what the Great Pyramid could have served for, and we could just as well say the same thing of the Pyramids in general; it is true that the opinion most commonly spread wants to see in them tombs, and, without doubt, this hypothesis has nothing impossible in itself; but, on the other hand, we also know that modern archaeologists, by virtue of certain preconceived ideas, willingly strive to discover tombs everywhere, even where there never was the least trace of any, and this is not without awakening in us some mistrust. In any case, one has never, up to the present, found any tomb in the Great Pyramid; but, even if there were one, the enigma would not yet be entirely resolved thereby, for, obviously, this would not exclude its having been able at the same time to have other uses, perhaps even more important, as certain other Pyramids may also have had, which indeed did serve as tombs; and it is still possible that, as some have thought, the funerary utilization of these monuments was more or less late, and that such was not their primitive destination, at the very time of their construction. If however one objects to this that certain ancient data, of a more or less traditional character, would seem to confirm that they are indeed tombs, we shall say this, which may seem strange at first sight, but which is nevertheless precisely what the considerations that follow would tend to have admitted: must not the tombs in question be understood in a purely symbolic sense?

Indeed, it is said by some that the Great Pyramid would be the tomb of Seyidna Idris, otherwise called the Prophet Enoch, while the second Pyramid would be that of another personage who would have been the Master of the former, and to whom we shall have to return; but, presented in this way and taken in the literal sense, the thing would

contain a manifest absurdity, since Enoch did not die, but was taken alive to Heaven; how then could he have a tomb? One should not however hasten too much here, in the Western fashion, to speak of "legends" devoid of foundation, for here is the explanation that is given of it: it was not the body of Idris that was buried in the Pyramid, but his science; and, by this, some understand that it is a matter of his books; but what plausibility is there that books would have been thus purely and simply buried, and what interest could that have presented from any point of view?[1] It would assuredly be much more plausible that the content of these books had been engraved in hieroglyphic characters inside the monument; but, unfortunately for such a supposition, there are found precisely in the Great Pyramid neither inscriptions nor symbolic figurations of any kind.[2] Then there remains only one acceptable hypothesis: it is that the science of Idris is indeed truly hidden in the Pyramid, but because it is included in its very structure, in its exterior and interior disposition and in its proportions; and all that can be valid in the "discoveries" that the moderns have made or believed they have made on this subject represents in sum only a few infinitesimal fragments of this ancient traditional science.

This interpretation moreover accords fairly well, at bottom, with another Arabic version of the origin of the Pyramids, which attributes their construction to the antediluvian king Surîd: the latter, having been warned by a dream of the imminence of the Flood, had them built according to the plan of the sages, and ordered the priests to deposit in them the secrets of their sciences and the precepts of their wisdom. Now it is known that Enoch or Idris, himself also antediluvian, is identified with Hermes or Thoth, who represents the source from which the Egyptian priesthood held its knowledge, then, by extension, this priesthood itself insofar as it was the continuer of the same function of

1 It scarcely needs to be remarked that the case of books ritually deposited in a true tomb is entirely different from this.

2 On all this again, we sometimes meet with singular and more or less completely fanciful assertions; thus, in the Occult Magazine, the organ of the H. B. of L., we have noted an allusion to the "78 blades of the Book of Hermes, which lies buried in one of the Pyramids" (issue of December 1885, p. 87); it is evidently the Tarot here, but it has never represented a Book of Hermes, Thoth, or Enoch except in certain very recent conceptions, and it is "Egyptian" only in the same way as are the Bohemians who have also been given this name. On the H. B. of L., cf. our book on Theosophism.

traditional teaching; it is thus indeed always the same sacred science which, in this way again, would have been deposited in the Pyramids.[3]

On the other hand, this monument destined to ensure the conservation of traditional knowledge, in view of the cataclysm, recalls yet another fairly well-known story, that of the two columns erected, according to some precisely by Enoch, according to others by Seth, and on which would have been inscribed the essential of all the sciences; and the mention that is made here of Seth brings us back to the personage whose tomb the second Pyramid is said to have been. Indeed, if the latter was the Master of Seyidna Idris, he can only have been Seyidna Shîth, that is to say Seth, son of Adam; it is true that ancient Arabic authors designate him by the names, strange in appearance, of Aghatîmun and Adhîmûn; but these names are visibly only deformations of the Greek Agathodaimôn, which, relating to the symbolism of the serpent envisaged under its beneficent aspect, applies perfectly to Seth, as we have explained on another occasion.[4] The particular connection thus established between Seth and Enoch is still very remarkable, all the more so as one and the other are also related, on the other hand, to certain traditions concerning a return to the terrestrial Paradise, that is to say to the "primordial state," and consequently to a "polar" symbolism which is not without having some link with the orientation of the Pyramids; but this is still another question, and we shall merely note in passing that this fact, implying quite clearly a reference to the "spiritual centers," would tend to confirm the hypothesis that makes of the Pyramids a place of initiation, which moreover would in sum have been only the normal means of maintaining "alive" the knowledge that had been included in them, at least so long as this initiation would subsist.

We shall still add another remark: it is said that Idris or Enoch wrote

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3 Yet another version, no longer Arabic, but Coptic, relates the origin of the Pyramids to Shedîd and Sheddâd, sons of Ad; We are not sure what conclusions could be drawn from this, and it does not seem that there is any reason to attach much importance to it, for, apart from the fact that we are dealing here with "giants", it is not clear what symbolic intention it could possibly cover

4 See our study of Sheth, chapter XX of Symbols of Sacred Science. The Agathodaimon of the Greeks is often identified also with Kneph, also represented by the serpent, and in connection with the "Egg of the World", which always refers to the same symbolism; as for the Kakodaimon, the evil aspect of the serpent, it is evidently identical with the Set-Typhon of the Egyptians.

numerous inspired books, after Adam himself and Seth had already written others;[5] these books were the prototypes of the sacred books of the Egyptians, and the more recent "Hermetic Books" represent in some way only a "readaptation" of them, just as likewise the various "Books of Enoch" that have come down to us under that name. On the other hand, the books of Adam, of Seth, and of Enoch had naturally to express respectively different aspects of traditional knowledge, implying a more special relation with such or such sacred sciences, as is always the case for the teaching transmitted by the various Prophets. It could be interesting, under these conditions, to ask whether there might not be something that corresponds in a certain way to these differences, as regards Enoch and Seth, in the structure of the two Pyramids of which we have spoken, and even also, perhaps, whether the third Pyramid could not then also have some relation with Adam, since, although we have encountered nowhere any explicit allusion to this, it would, all things considered, be quite logical to suppose that it should complete the ternary of the great antediluvian Prophets.[6] Of course, we in no way think that these questions are of those that are susceptible of being resolved at the present time; moreover, all modern "researchers" have, so to speak, "hypnotized" themselves almost exclusively on the Great Pyramid, although, after all, it is not so much larger than the other two, in reality, that the difference should be very striking; and, when they assert, in order to justify the exceptional importance that they attribute to it, that it is the only one that is exactly oriented, perhaps they are wrong not to reflect that certain variations in orientation might well not be due simply to some negligence on the part of the builders, but precisely reflect something that relates to different traditional "epochs"; but how could one expect modern Westerners to have, in order to guide them in their researches, notions even somewhat just and precise on things of this kind?[7]

5 The numbers given for these books vary, and in many cases they may be only symbolic numbers; this point is of rather secondary importance.

6 It goes without saying that this does not mean that the construction of the Pyramids should be literally attributed to them, but only that it may have constituted a "fixation" of the traditional sciences that are related to them respectively.

7 The idea that the Great Pyramid differs essentially from the other two seems to be very recent; it is said that the Caliph El-Mamûn, wishing to realize what the Pyramids contained, decided to open one; it happened to be the Great Pyramid, but it does not seem that he thought that it must have had an absolutely special character.

Another observation that also has its importance is that the very name of Hermes is far from being unknown to the Arabic tradition;[8] and must one see only a "coincidence" in the similarity that it presents with the word Haram (plural Ahrâm), Arabic designation of the Pyramid, from which it differs only by the simple addition of a final letter that does not form part of its root? Hermes is called El-muthallith bil-hikam, literally "triple by wisdom,"[9] which is equivalent to the Greek epithet Trismegistos, while being more explicit, for the "greatness" expressed by the latter is, at bottom, only the consequence of the wisdom that is the proper attribute of Hermes.[10] This "triplicity" moreover has yet another meaning, for it is sometimes developed under the form of three distinct Hermeses: the first, called "Hermes of the Hermeses" (Hermes El-Harâmesah), and considered as antediluvian, is the one who is properly identified with Seyidna Idris; the two others, who would be postdiluvian, are the "Babylonian Hermes" (El-Bâbelî) and the "Egyptian Hermes" (El-Miçrî); this seems to indicate fairly clearly that the two Chaldean and Egyptian traditions would have been derived directly from one and the same principal source, which, given the antediluvian character that is thus recognized in it, cannot scarcely be other than the Atlantean tradition.[11]

Whatever one may think of all these considerations, which are assuredly as far removed from the views of Egyptologists as from those of modern investigators of the "secret of the Pyramid," it is permissible to say that the latter truly represents the "tomb of Hermes," for the mysteries of his

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8 Alongside the correct form Hermes, we also find, in some authors, the form Armis, which is evidently an alteration of it

9 Hikam is the plural of Hikmah, but both singular and plural forms are also used with the meaning of "wisdom."

10 It may be curious to note that the word muthalleth also designates the triangle, for one could, without forcing things too much, find in it some connection with the triangular shape of the faces of the Pyramid, which must have been determined also "by the wisdom" of those who drew up the plans, not to mention that the triangle is also connected, to the symbolism of the "Pole," and, from this last point of view, it is quite obvious that the Pyramid itself is in fact only one of the images of the "Sacred Mountain."

11 It is easy to understand that all this is, in any case, already quite far from the primordial Tradition; and it would be of little use to designate the latter especially as the common source of two particular traditions, since it is necessarily that of all traditional forms without exception. – On the other hand, one could conclude from the order in which the three Hermes are enumerated, insofar as it seems to have any chronological significance, that the Chaldean tradition is somewhat anterior to the Egyptian tradition

wisdom and of his science have been hidden there in such a way that it is certainly very difficult to discover them there.[12]

12 While we are on this subject, we will point out yet another modern fantasy: we have found that some attribute considerable importance to the fact that the Great Pyramid was never completed; the summit is indeed missing, but all that can be said for sure in this respect is that the oldest authors of whom we have the testimony, and who are still relatively recent, have always seen it truncated as it is today. From there, to claim that this missing summit corresponds to the "cornerstone" spoken of in various passages of the Bible and the Gospel, is a very long way, especially since, according to more authentically traditional data, the stone in question would not be a "pyramidion", but a "keystone". and, if it was "rejected by the builders", it was because the latter, being initiated only in Masonry Square, were ignorant of the secrets of the Arch Masonry. "Curiously enough, the seal of the United States represents the truncated Pyramid, above which is a radiating triangle which, while separated, and even isolated by the circle of clouds which surrounds it, seems in some way to replace the apex; but there are also in this seal, which certain "pseudo-initiatic" organizations seek to take advantage of in a somewhat suspicious manner, other details which are at least bizarre: thus, the number of the foundations of the Pyramid, which is thirteen, is said to correspond to that of the tribes of Israel (counting separately the two half-tribes of the sons of Joseph). and this is perhaps not altogether unrelated to the real origins of certain contemporary ramblings about the Great Pyramid, tending, as we have already said, to make of it, for rather obscure purposes, a sort of "Judeo-Christian" monument.

January 1937

TRADITION AND TRANSMISSION

It often happens that questions which are put to us show us the necessity of insisting on points which seemed to us sufficiently clear as to have no need of further explanation, and where we would not have thought that there could be matter for some objection deserving to be examined in a more particular manner. Thus we find ourselves led to specify once again the very notion of tradition: it is remarked to us, in fact, that the word "tradition," in its etymological sense, expresses in sum no other idea than that of transmission; we ourselves had moreover already indicated this, quite a long time ago, in the course of our studies on initiation[1], which indeed shows that, for our part, we saw nothing there except something perfectly normal and in agreement with the application that is made of it when one speaks of "tradition" in the sense in which we understand it. However, here is the objection that is raised on this subject: anything whatsoever can be the object of a transmission, including things of the most profane order; then why could one not speak just as well of "tradition" for everything that is thus transmitted, whatever its nature may be, instead of restricting the use of this word to the sole domain that we call "sacred"?

We must first of all make an important remark, which already greatly reduces the scope of this question: it is that, if one were to go back to the origins, this question would not have to be raised, the distinction that it implies being then nonexistent. In fact, there is not properly speaking a profane domain, to which a certain order of things would belong by its very nature; there is only, in reality, a profane point of view, which is, as we have often explained, nothing but the consequence and the product of a kind of degeneration, itself resulting from the downward course of the human cycle and from its gradual distancing from the principial

1 See De la transmission initiatique (December 1930).

state. Therefore, prior to this degeneration, that is to say in sum in the normal state of humanity not yet fallen, one can say that everything truly had a traditional character, because everything was envisaged in its essential dependence with regard to principles and in conformity with them, in such a way that a profane activity, that is to say one separated from these same principles and ignoring them, would have been something inconceivable, even for what falls under what one has agreed to call today "ordinary life," or at least for what could correspond to it at that time, and all the more so for what concerns the sciences, the arts, and the crafts, for which this traditional character was maintained much later and is still found in every civilization of normal type, so much so that one could say that their profane conception is exclusively proper to modern civilization alone, which itself represents, at bottom, nothing but the ultimate degree of the degeneration of which we have just spoken.

If we now consider the state of fact subsequent to this degeneration, we may ask why the idea of tradition excludes from it what is henceforth treated as being of a profane order, that is to say what no longer has a conscious link with principles, in order to apply only to what has kept its original character, with the "transcendent" aspect that it implies. It is not enough to state that usage has willed it thus, at least so long as the confusions and deviations of a completely modern character, to which we have previously drawn attention, had not yet been produced; it is true that usage often modifies the original sense of words, and that it can notably add or subtract something from it; but even this must also have its reason for being, and, above all in a case such as that with which we are dealing here, this reason cannot be indifferent. We may moreover remark that this fact is not limited to the sole languages that employ this Latin word "tradition"; in Hebrew, the word qabbalah, which has exactly the same meaning of transmission, is likewise reserved for the designation of tradition as we understand it, and even, more strictly still, for its esoteric and initiatic part, that is to say for what is most "interior" and most elevated in this tradition, for what constitutes in some way its very spirit; and this again clearly shows that there must be there something more important and more significant than a simple question

of usage in the sense in which one may understand it when it is only a matter of any modifications of current language.

In the first place, there is already an indication that results immediately from this, namely that, as we were saying just now, that to which the name of tradition applies is what is, in sum, in its very foundation, if not necessarily in its outward expression, remained such as it was at the origin; it is therefore indeed a matter of something that has been transmitted, one could say, from an anterior state of humanity to its present state. At the same time, one may remark that the "transcendent" character of everything that is traditional also implies a transmission in another sense, proceeding from the principles themselves so as to be communicated to the human state; and this sense in a certain way joins and obviously completes the preceding one. One could even, by taking up here the terms that we have used elsewhere to expound the symbolism of the cross, speak at once of a "vertical" transmission, from the supra-human to the human, and of a "horizontal" transmission, through the successive states or stages of humanity: the vertical transmission is moreover essentially "intemporal," the horizontal transmission alone implying a chronological succession.

Let us add further that the vertical transmission, which is such when one envisages it from above to below as we have just done, becomes, if one takes it on the contrary from below to above, a "participation" of humanity in the realities of the principial order, a participation which, in fact, is precisely ensured by tradition under all its forms, since it is there that humanity is placed in effective and conscious relation with what is superior to it. There is yet something else: to the character of "transcendence" which essentially belongs to principles, and in which everything that is effectively connected to them participates thereby to some degree, is added a character of "permanence" which expresses the immutability likewise communicated from these same principles, and which is extended as far as possible to their applications, even when these refer to contingent domains. This does not mean, of course, that tradition is not susceptible of "adaptations" conditioned by certain circumstances; but, under these modifications, permanence is always

maintained as to what is essential; and, even when it is a matter of contingencies, these contingencies as such are in some way surpassed and "transformed" by the very fact of their connection with principles.

On the contrary, when one places oneself at the profane point of view, which is characterized, in a way that can moreover only be wholly negative, by the absence of such a connection, one is, if one may say so, in pure contingency, with all that it entails of instability and incessant variability and without any possibility of emerging from it; it is in some way the reign of "fashion," which represents in this respect the most striking image. One may conclude from this that tradition comprises not only everything that is worthy of being transmitted, but even everything that can truly be so, since the rest, what is devoid of traditional character and which consequently falls within the profane point of view, is dominated by change to such a degree that any transmission there soon becomes a pure and simple "anachronism," or a "superstition," in the etymological sense of the word, which no longer corresponds to anything real or valid.

One must now understand why tradition and transmission may be regarded, without any abuse of language, as almost synonymous or equivalent, or why, at the very least, tradition, under whatever aspect one envisages it, constitutes what one could call transmission par excellence. On the other hand, if this idea of transmission is so essentially inherent in the traditional point of view that the latter has legitimately been able to draw from it its very designation, all that we have said of the necessity of a regular transmission for what belongs to this traditional order, and more particularly to the initiatic order which is an integral and even "eminent" part of it, is thereby further reinforced and even acquires a sort of immediate evidence which should, in the eyes of the simplest logic, and without even appealing to more profound considerations, render definitively impossible any contestation on this point, where moreover only "pseudo-initiatic" organizations have an interest, because this transmission is lacking to them, in maintaining equivocation and confusion.

REMARKS ON MATHEMATICAL NOTATION

We have often had occasion to point out that most profane sciences, the only ones that moderns know or even conceive as possible, in reality represent nothing but simple denatured residues of the ancient traditional sciences, in the sense that it is the lowest part of the latter which, having ceased to be put in relation with principles and having thereby lost its true original significance, has come to take on an independent development and to be regarded as a knowledge sufficient unto itself. Modern mathematics does not form an exception in this respect, if one compares it with what the science of numbers and geometry were for the ancients; and, when we speak here of the ancients, one must include even "classical" antiquity, as the slightest study of Pythagorean and Platonic theories suffices to show, or should suffice at least if one did not have to reckon with the extraordinary incomprehension of those who today claim to interpret them; if this incomprehension were not so complete, how could one, for example, maintain the opinion of an "empirical" origin of the sciences in question, whereas, in reality, they appear on the contrary all the more removed from all "empiricism" the further back one goes, just as is moreover the case for every other branch of knowledge?

Modern mathematicians seem to have come to ignore what number truly is, for they reduce their whole science to calculation, which is for them a simple ensemble of more or less artificial procedures, which, in sum, amounts to saying that they replace number by the numeral; moreover, this confusion of number with numeral is so widespread nowadays that one could find it at every moment even in the expressions of everyday language. Now, the numeral is properly nothing more than the garment of the number; we do not even say its body, for it is rather geometric form which, in certain respects, may legitimately be regarded as the true body of number, as the theories of the ancients on polygons and polyhedra, put in direct relation with the symbolism of numbers, show.

We do not wish to say, however, that numerals themselves are entirely arbitrary signs, whose form would have been determined only by the fancy of one or several individuals; it must be for numerical characters as for alphabetic characters, from which they do not even differ in certain languages, and one may apply to the one as well as to the other the notion of a hieroglyphic origin, that is to say ideographic or symbolic, which holds for all scripts without exception.

What is certain is that mathematicians employ in their notation symbols whose meaning they no longer know, and which are like vestiges of forgotten traditions; and what is most serious is that not only do they not ask themselves what this meaning may be, but even that they seem not to want there to be one. In fact, they increasingly tend to regard all notation as a simple "convention," by which they mean something that is posited in a wholly arbitrary manner, which, at bottom, is a veritable impossibility, for one never makes a convention without having some reason for making it, and for making precisely that one rather than any other: it is only to those who are ignorant of this reason that the convention may appear arbitrary, and that is indeed what happens here.

In such a case, it is moreover only too easy to pass from the legitimate and valid use of a notation to an illegitimate use which no longer corresponds to anything real, and which may even sometimes be quite illogical; this may seem strange when it is a matter of a science such as mathematics, which should have particularly close links with logic, and yet it is only too true that one can note multiple illogicalities in mathematical notions as they are commonly envisaged. One of the most striking examples of these illogical notions is that of the so-called mathematical infinite, which, as we have amply explained on other occasions, is and can in reality be nothing but the indefinite; and one must not believe that this confusion of the infinite and the indefinite is reduced to a simple question of words.

What mathematicians represent by the sign ∞ cannot in any way be the Infinite understood in its true sense; this sign ∞ itself is a formed figure, therefore visibly finite, just as is the circle which some have wished to

make a symbol of eternity, whereas it can only be a figure of a temporal cycle, indefinite only in its order, that is to say of what is properly called perpetuity; and it is easy to see that this confusion of eternity and perpetuity is closely related to that of the infinite and the indefinite. In fact, the indefinite is only a development of the finite; but from the latter one cannot bring forth the Infinite, which moreover cannot be quantitative, any more than it can be anything determined whatsoever, for quantity, being only a special mode of reality, is essentially limited by the infinite. On the other hand, the idea of an infinite number, that is to say, according to the definition given by mathematicians, a number that would be greater than every other number, is an idea contradictory in itself, for however great a number N may be, the number N + 1 will always be greater, by virtue of the very law of formation of the indefinite series of numbers; and from this contradiction there follow many others, as certain philosophers have remarked, who however have not always clearly seen the true scope of this argumentation, for there are some who have believed they could apply to the metaphysical Infinite itself what bears only against the false mathematical infinite, thus committing again, though in the opposite sense, the same confusion as their adversaries.

It is evidently absurd to wish to define the Infinite, for every definition is necessarily a limitation, as the words themselves say clearly enough, and the Infinite is that which has no limits; to seek to make it enter into a formula, that is to say in sum to clothe it with a form, is to strive to make the universal Whole enter into one of the most infinitesimal elements that are comprised in it, which is manifestly impossible; finally, to conceive the Infinite as a quantity is not only to limit it as we have just said, but is moreover, in addition, to conceive it as susceptible of increase or diminution, which is no less absurd. With such considerations, one quickly comes to envisage several infinites which coexist without confusing or excluding one another, infinites which are greater or smaller than other infinites, and even, the infinite no longer sufficing, one invents the “transfinite,” that is to say the domain of numbers greater than the infinite: so many words, so many absurdities, even from the standpoint of simple elementary logic.

It is deliberately that we speak here of "invention," for, if the realities of the mathematical order can, like all other realities, only be discovered and not invented, it is clear that it is no longer the same when one lets oneself be carried, by the effect of a misuse of notation, into the domain of pure fantasy; but how could one hope to make this difference understood by mathematicians who willingly imagine that all exact science is and must be nothing other than a "construction of the human mind," which would assuredly reduce it, if one were to believe them, to being very little indeed?

What we have said for the indefinitely great is likewise true for what is no less improperly called the indefinitely small: however small a number N may be, the number N − 1 will still be smaller; we shall return later to the sense that it is fitting to attribute exactly to this notation. There is therefore in reality neither indefinitely great nor indefinitely small, but one may envisage the series of numbers as increasing or decreasing indefinitely, so that the so-called mathematical infinite is indeed nothing but the indefinite, which, let us repeat once more, proceeds from the finite and is consequently always reducible to it. The indefinite is therefore still finite, that is to say limited; even if we do not know its limits or if we are incapable of determining them, we nevertheless know that these limits exist, for every indefinite is only a certain order of things, which is bounded by the very existence of other things outside it. Thereby, one may evidently envisage a multitude of indefinites; one may even add them to one another or multiply them by one another, which naturally leads to the consideration of indefinites of unequal magnitude, and even of different orders of indefiniteness, whether in the increasing sense or in the decreasing sense. It is easy to understand thereby what the absurdities we were pointing out earlier really signify, and which cease to be absurdities when one replaces the so-called mathematical infinite with the indefinite; but it is well understood that everything that one can thus obtain, just as much as the ordinary finite of which it is never anything but an extension, is without any relation to the Infinite and is always rigorously null in comparison with it.

At the same time, these considerations also show in a precise manner the impossibility of arriving at synthesis by analysis: however much one may successively add to one another an indefinite number of elements, one will never obtain the Whole, because the Whole is infinite and not indefinite; one cannot conceive it otherwise than as infinite, for it could only be limited by something external to it, and then it would no longer be the Whole; if one may say that it is the sum of all its elements, it is only on condition of understanding this word sum in the sense of an integral, and an integral is not calculated by taking its elements one by one; even if one could suppose that one had analytically traversed one or several indefinites, one would not for all that have advanced a single step from the universal point of view, and one would always be exactly at the same point with regard to the Infinite.

All this may moreover be applied analogically to domains other than that of quantity; and the consequence that results immediately from this is that profane science, whose points of view and methods are exclusively analytical, is thereby incapable of surpassing certain limitations; the imperfection here is not inherent simply in its present state, as some would like to believe, but indeed in its very nature, that is to say, in the final analysis, in its lack of principles.

We have said that the series of numbers may be considered as indefinite in both senses, increasing and decreasing; but this still calls for some explanation, for an objection may immediately present itself: namely that true number, what one could call pure number, is essentially integer number; and the series of integers, starting from unity, increases indefinitely, but it develops entirely in a single direction, and thus the other opposite direction, that of indefinite decrease, cannot find its representation there. However, one has been led to consider various kinds of numbers other than integers; these are, it is usually said, extensions of the idea of number, and this is true in a certain way; but at the same time, these extensions are also alterations of it, and this is what mathematicians seem too easily to forget, because their "conventionalism" makes them fail to recognize their origin and their

reason for being. In fact, numbers other than integers always present themselves, first and foremost, as the figuration of the result of operations which are impossible when one places oneself at the point of view of pure arithmetic, the latter being strictly speaking only the arithmetic of integers; but it is not arbitrarily that one comes to consider the result of such operations, instead of simply regarding them as impossible; it is, in a general way, as a consequence of the application that is made of number, which is discontinuous quantity, to the measurement of magnitudes which, like spatial magnitudes for example, are of the order of continuous quantity.

Between these modes of quantity there is a difference of nature such that the correspondence of the one to the other cannot be established perfectly; in order to remedy this to a certain extent, one seeks in some way to reduce the intervals of this discontinuous which is constituted by the series of integers, by introducing between its terms other numbers such as fractional and incommensurable numbers, which would have no meaning outside of this consideration. It must moreover be said that, despite this, there always necessarily remains something of the essentially discontinuous nature of number, which does not allow one to obtain thereby a perfect equivalent of the continuous; one may reduce the intervals as much as one wishes, that is to say in sum reduce them indefinitely, but not suppress them; one is therefore led here again to envisage a certain aspect of the indefinite, and this could find its application in an examination of the principles of infinitesimal calculus, but this is not what we propose to do at present.

With these reservations and under these conditions, one may admit certain of these extensions of the idea of number to which we have just alluded, and give them, or rather restore to them, a legitimate significance; thus we may envisage in particular the inverses of integers, represented by symbols of the form 1/n, and which form the indefinitely decreasing series, symmetrical to the indefinitely increasing series of integers. One must still remark that, although the symbol 1/n may evoke the idea of fractional numbers, the numbers of which it is a matter here are not defined as such; it suffices for us to consider the two series as

constituted by numbers respectively greater and smaller than unity, that is to say as two orders of magnitudes which have in unity their common limit, at the same time as they may be regarded the one and the other as equally issuing from this unity, which is truly the first source of all numbers.

Since we have spoken of fractional numbers, we shall show on this subject that the definition ordinarily given of them is still absurd: fractions cannot be "parts of unity," as one says, for true unity is necessarily indivisible and without parts; arithmetically, a fractional number represents nothing other than the quotient of a division, that is to say of an impossible operation; but this absurdity comes from a confusion between arithmetic unity and what are called "units of measure," which are such only conventionally and which are in reality magnitudes of another order. For example, the unit of length is a certain length chosen for reasons foreign to mathematics, in order that to this magnitude one may correspond a number, in order to be able to measure with respect to it all other lengths; but, by its very nature as a continuous magnitude, this unit of length is always and indefinitely divisible; one may therefore, by comparing other lengths to it, come to consider parts of this unit of measure, but one in no way thereby considers parts of arithmetic unity; and it is only thus that the consideration of fractional numbers is really introduced, as representation of ratios between magnitudes which are not exactly divisible by one another. The measurement of a magnitude is in fact nothing other than the numerical expression of its ratio to another magnitude of the same kind taken as a unit of measure, that is to say at bottom as a term of comparison; and one sees thereby that all measurement is essentially founded on division, which could still give rise to other important observations, but which are outside our subject.

That being said, we may return to the double numerical indefiniteness constituted, in the increasing sense, by the series of integers, and, in the decreasing sense, by that of their inverses; these two series start both from unity, which alone is its own inverse, since 1/1 = 1. There are moreover as many numbers in one of the series as in the other, so that, if

one considers these two indefinite sets as forming a single sequence, one may say that unity occupies exactly the middle in this sequence of numbers; in fact, to every number n of one of the series there corresponds in the other series a number 1/n, such that $n \times 1/n = 1$; the ensemble of the two inverse numbers, multiplying one another, reproduces unity. If one wished, in order to generalize further, to introduce fractional numbers, instead of considering only the series of integers and that of their inverses as we have just done, nothing would be changed in this respect: one would have on one side all numbers greater than unity, and on the other all numbers smaller than unity; here again, to every number greater than 1 there would correspond in the other group an inverse number smaller than 1, and reciprocally, in such a way that their product would always be equal to unity, and thus there would always be exactly as many numbers in the one as in the other of these two indefinite groups separated by unity.

One may also say that unity, occupying the middle, corresponds to the state of perfect equilibrium, and that it contains within itself all numbers, which issue from it in pairs of inverse or complementary numbers, each of these pairs constituting, by virtue of this complementarism, a relative unity in its indivisible duality; we shall later develop the consequences implied by these various considerations.

(*To be continued.*)

February 1937

RITES AND CEREMONIES

In an age of confusion such as ours, the most extraordinary affirmations have become possible and are even commonly accepted, those who put them forward and those who hear them being affected by the same lack of discernment; the observer of the various manifestations of the contemporary mentality has to note, at every instant, so many things of this kind, in all orders and in all domains, that he ought in the end no longer to be astonished by anything. Yet, despite all this, it is very difficult to defend oneself against a certain feeling of astonishment when one sees alleged "spiritual instructors," whom some even believe to be invested with more or less exceptional "missions," take refuge behind their "horror of ceremonies" in order to reject indiscriminately all rites, of whatever nature they may be, and even to declare themselves resolutely hostile to them. This horror is, in itself, a perfectly admissible thing, even legitimate if one wishes, on the condition of allowing a large place to a question of individual preferences and of not wanting everyone necessarily to share it; in any case, for our part, we understand it without the slightest difficulty; but we would certainly never have suspected that certain rites could be assimilated to "ceremonies," nor that rites in general ought to be regarded as having in themselves such a character. It is there that the confusion lies, truly strange on the part of those who have some pretension, more or less avowed, to serve as "guides" to others in spiritual matters.

We have explained often enough the importance of rites, as we have already done many times, as indispensable "vehicles" of the "spiritual influences" without which there could be no question of the slightest effective contact with realities of a higher order, but only of vague aspirations and of idealism more or less ill-defined, and of speculation.

We shall not linger here over seeking what may be the obscure motive that leads to such an attitude; it is moreover understood that we take the word “ceremony” in the sense that it constantly has in current language, and which is sufficiently well known to everyone for there to be no need to insist upon it: it is, in sum, always a manifestation involving a more or less great external display, of pomp, whatever the circumstances that may provide the occasion for it. It is obvious that one may invoke this pretext on every occasion where it may arise, and that it does in fact arise very often.

It is equally evident—and we shall return to this later—that there also exists, alongside rites properly so called, a multitude of ceremonies that have a purely profane character, and therefore that are not rites at all; but it is none the less a manifest abuse to decorate with the name of rites things that are in reality only ceremonies, and which are often destined to supplant the true rites, which they naturally imitate only in an entirely exterior way, that is to say purely on the “ceremonial” side. The rite itself, of which the ceremony was in some way only a simple “envelope,” is then entirely nonexistent, since there cannot be any such thing as a profane rite, which would be a contradiction in terms; and one may wonder whether the conscious inspirers of these gross counterfeits are simply counting on general ignorance and incomprehension in order to have such a substitution accepted, or whether they themselves share it to a certain extent.

We shall not seek to resolve this last question, and we shall only recall, for those who might be astonished that it can be raised, that the intelligence of properly spiritual realities is rigorously closed to “counter-initiation”; but all that matters to us precisely is the very fact that there exist ceremonies without rites, just as there exist rites without ceremonies, which suffices to show to what extent it is erroneous to wish to establish between the two things any identification or assimilation whatsoever.

We have often said that, in a strictly traditional civilization, everything truly has a ritual character, including the very actions of ordinary life;

should one therefore suppose, on that account, that men must live there, so to speak, in a state of perpetual ceremony? This is literally unimaginable, and it suffices to formulate the question thus for its entire absurdity to appear immediately; one must even say rather that it is quite the contrary of such a supposition that is true, for, rites then being something entirely natural, and in no degree having the character of exception that they seem to present when the consciousness of tradition weakens and when the profane point of view comes into being and spreads in proportion to this weakening, any ceremonies whatsoever accompanying these rites, and in some way underlining this exceptional character, would assuredly have no reason to exist in such a case. If one goes back to the origins, the rite is nothing other than "that which is in conformity with order," according to the meaning of the Sanskrit term rita; it is therefore that which alone is truly "normal," whereas the ceremony, on the contrary, always and inevitably gives the impression of something more or less abnormal, outside the habitual and regular course of events that fill the rest of existence.

This impression, let us note in passing, could perhaps contribute in part to explaining the very singular manner in which modern Westerners, who scarcely know how to separate religion from ceremonies, regard it as something entirely isolated, which no longer has any real relation with the ensemble of other activities to which they devote their lives.

Every ceremony has an artificial, even conventional character, so to speak, because it is, in the final analysis, only the product of an entirely human elaboration; even if it is destined to accompany a rite, this character is opposed to that of the rite itself, which, on the contrary, essentially involves a "non-human" element. He who performs a rite, if he has attained a certain degree of effective knowledge, can and must even have the awareness that there is there something that surpasses him, that in no way depends on his individual initiative; but, as for ceremonies, if they may impress those who attend them, and who are thereby reduced to the role of simple spectators rather than "participants," it is quite clear that those who organize them and regulate their arrangement know perfectly well what to think of them

and realize fully that all the efficacy that one may expect from them is entirely subordinate to the arrangements made by themselves and to the manner, more or less satisfactory, in which they will be executed. In fact, this efficacy, precisely because there is there nothing but what is human, cannot be of a truly profound order, and is in sum purely "psychological"; this is why one may say that it is indeed a matter of impressing those present or of imposing upon them by all sorts of sensible means; and, in ordinary language itself, is not one of the greatest praises that one can bestow on a ceremony precisely to qualify it as "imposing," without moreover the true meaning of this epithet generally being well understood?

Let us remark further, in this connection, that those who want to recognize in rites only effects of a "psychological" order also confuse them thereby, perhaps without realizing it, with ceremonies, and this because they fail to recognize their "non-human" character, by virtue of which their real effects, insofar as they are rites properly so called and independently of all accessory circumstances, are on the contrary of an order totally different from that.

Now, one might ask this question: why thus adjoin ceremonies to rites, as if the "non-human" needed this human assistance, whereas it ought rather to remain as free as possible from such contingencies? The truth is that there is here quite simply a consequence of the necessity that imposes itself of taking account of the factual conditions that are those of terrestrial humanity, at least in such and such a period of its existence; it is a concession made to a certain state of spiritual decadence of the men who are called upon to participate in the rites; it is these men, and not the rites, who need the help of ceremonies. There can in no way be any question of reinforcing or intensifying the very effect of rites in their proper domain, but only of rendering them more accessible to the individuals to whom they are addressed, of preparing these latter for them as far as possible, by placing them in an appropriate emotional and mental state; that is all that ceremonies can do, and it must be acknowledged that they are far from being useless in this respect and that, for the generality of men, they in fact fulfill this role fairly well.

This is also why they truly have a reason for being only in the exoteric order, which addresses itself to all without distinction; if it is a matter of the esoteric or initiatic order, things are entirely different, since the latter must be reserved for an elite which, by the very definition of the term, does not need these entirely external "adjuncts," its "qualification" implying precisely that it is superior to the state of decadence which is that of the greatest number; thus the introduction of ceremonies into this order, if it nevertheless comes about at times, can only be explained by a certain degeneration of the initiatic organizations in which such a fact occurs.

What we have just said defines the legitimate role of ceremonies; but, alongside this, there is also abuse and danger: since what is purely exterior is also, by the very force of things, what is most immediately apparent, there is always reason to fear that the accidental may cause the essential to be lost from view, and that ceremonies may take on, in the eyes of those who witness them, much more importance than the rites, which they in some way conceal beneath an accumulation of accessory forms. It may even happen, which is still more serious, that this error is shared by those whose function it is to perform the rites as authorized representatives of a tradition, if they themselves are affected by this general spiritual decadence of which we have spoken; and there then results that, true comprehension having disappeared, everything is reduced, consciously at least, to an excessive and unreasonable "formalism," which will readily attach itself above all to maintaining the brilliance of ceremonies and to amplifying it beyond measure, holding almost negligible the rite which would be reduced to the essential, and which is nevertheless all that should truly count. This is, for a traditional form, a sort of degeneration that borders on "superstition" understood in its etymological sense, since respect for forms survives there to their comprehension, and thus the "letter" entirely stifles the "spirit"; "ceremonialism" is not the observance of ritual, it is rather the forgetting of its profound value and of its real significance, the more or less coarse materialization of the conceptions one forms of its nature and of its role, and, finally, the failure to recognize the "non-human" in favor of the human.

REMARKS ON MATHEMATICAL NOTATION

(continued)[1]

If we consider, as previously stated, the series of integers and that of their inverses, the former is indefinitely increasing and the latter indefinitely decreasing; we could say that, in this way, numbers tend on the one hand towards the indefinitely large and on the other towards the indefinitely small, meaning by this the very limits of the domain in which we consider these numbers, since a variable quantity can only tend towards a limit. The domain in question is, in short, that of the numerical quantity considered in all its possible extension; this amounts to saying that its limits are not determined by any particular number, however large or small we may suppose it to be, but solely by the very nature of the number as such. It is precisely because the number, like everything else of a determinate nature, excludes everything that is not itself, that there can be no question here of infinity. Moreover, we have just stated that the indefinitely large must necessarily be conceived as a limit, and it is worth noting in this regard that the expression "to tend towards infinity," used by mathematicians in the sense of "to grow indefinitely," is also an absurdity, since infinity obviously implies the absence of any limit, and consequently there would be nothing there toward which it is possible to tend. It goes without saying that the same observations would also apply to modes of quantity other than number, that is to say, to the different kinds of continuous quantity, particularly spatial and temporal; each of these, in its own order, is similarly susceptible to indefinite extension, but essentially limited by its very nature, as is quantity itself in all its generality; the mere fact that there are things to which quantity is not applicable suffices to establish that the supposed notion of "quantitative infinity" is contradictory.

On the other hand, since a domain is indefinite, we do not distinctly know its limits, and consequently, we cannot fix them precisely; therein

lies, in short, the whole difference with ordinary finiteness. A kind of indeterminacy therefore remains, but it is only indeterminacy from our point of view, and not in reality itself, since the limits nonetheless exist for that reason; whether we see them or not, it cannot change the nature of things. One could also say, with regard to number, that this apparent indeterminacy results from the fact that the sequence of numbers, as a whole, is not "terminated" by a certain number, as is always the case with any portion of this sequence that can be considered in isolation; Therefore, there is no number, however large, that can be identified with the indefinitely large in the sense we have just understood it, and, naturally, symmetrical considerations would also apply to the indefinitely small. However, one can at least consider a number practically indefinite, if one may put it that way, when it can no longer be stated in language or represented in writing, which, in fact, inevitably happens at some point when considering numbers that are always increasing or decreasing; this is, if you will, a simple question of "perspective," but this very thing agrees with the nature of the indefinite, which, ultimately, is nothing other than that whose limits can be, not eliminated—which is impossible because the finite can only produce the finite—but simply pushed back until they are entirely lost from sight.

In this regard, some rather curious questions arise: for example, one might wonder why the Chinese language symbolically represents the indefinite with the number ten thousand; the expression "the ten thousand things," for instance, signifies all beings, which are indeed indefinite in multitude. What is most remarkable is that precisely the same thing also occurs in Greek, where a single word, with a simple difference in accentuation that is obviously only a completely secondary detail, serves to express both ideas: μὺριοι, ten thousand; μυρίοι, an indefiniteness. The real reason for this is this: the number ten thousand is the fourth power of ten; Now, according to the formula of the Tao Te Ching, "one produced two, two produced three, three produced all numbers," which implies that four, immediately multiplied by three, is in a certain way equivalent to the entire set of numbers, and this is because, as soon as we have the quaternary, we also have, by adding the

first four numbers, the denarius, which represents a complete numerical cycle: 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10; this is the Pythagorean Tetraktys, the meaning of which we may return to more specifically in another occasion. It can also be added that this representation of numerical indefiniteness has its counterpart in the spatial order: we know that raising to a higher power of one degree represents, in this order, the addition of a dimension; now, since our extension has only three dimensions, its limits are exceeded when we go beyond the third power, which, in other words, amounts to saying that raising to the fourth power marks the very end of its indefiniteness, since, as soon as it is achieved, we have thereby left this extension.

Whatever the case may be with these last considerations, the indefinitely large is in reality what mathematicians represent, as we have said, by the symbol ∞; if this symbol did not have this meaning, it would truly have no meaning at all. and, according to the foregoing, what is thus represented is not a determined number, but in a way a whole domain, which is moreover necessary in order for it to be possible to consider, according to what we have already indicated, inequalities and even different orders of magnitude in the indefinite. As for the indefinitely small, which can be regarded, in a similar way, as being everything which, in descending order, lies beyond the limits of our means of evaluation, and which, consequently, we are led to consider as practically non-existent in relation to us as a quantity, we can, without introducing here the differential or infinitesimal notation which, in fact, only has a reason for being for the study of continuous variations, represent it as a whole by the symbol 0, although this is, in truth, only one of the meanings of zero; And it must be clearly understood that this symbol, for the same reasons as that of the indefinitely large, does not represent a definite number either.

The series of numbers, as we have considered it to extend indefinitely, through the integers and their inverses, in both ascending and descending directions, therefore takes the following form:

0 … 1/4, 1/3, 1/2, 1, 2, 3, 4, … ∞;

Two numbers equidistant from the central unit are inverses or complements of each other, therefore, as we explained previously, reproduce the unit by their multiplication: $1/n \times n = 1$, so that, for the two ends of the series, we are led to write also: $0 \times \infty = 1$. However, because the signs 0 and ∞, which are the two factors of this last product, do not actually represent determinate numbers, it follows that the expression $0 \times \infty$ itself constitutes what is called an indeterminate form, and we must then write: $0 \times \infty = n$, n being any number; but, in any case, we are thus brought back to the ordinary finite, the two opposite indefinites neutralizing each other, so to speak. It is still very clear here that the symbol ∞ does not represent Infinity, because Infinity can have neither opposite nor complement, and it cannot be correlated with anything, neither with zero nor with unity or any other number; being the absolute All, it contains both Non-Being and Being, so that zero itself, insofar as it is not pure nothingness, must necessarily be considered as included within Infinity.

By alluding here to Non-Being, we touch upon another meaning of zero, different from the one we have just considered, and which is even the most important from the point of view of its metaphysical symbolism. But in this respect, to avoid any confusion between the symbol and what it represents, it is important to clarify that metaphysical Zero, which is Non-Being, is not zero of quantity, any more than metaphysical Unity, which is Being, is arithmetic unity; what is thus designated by these terms can only be so by analogical transposition, since, as soon as one places oneself within the Universal, one is obviously beyond any special domain such as that of quantity. Moreover, it is not insofar as it represents the indefinitely small that zero can be taken as the symbol of Non-Being, but insofar as, according to another of its mathematical meanings, it represents the absence of quantity, which indeed symbolizes in its order the possibility of non-manifestation, just as unity symbolizes the possibility of manifestation, being the starting point of the indefinite multiplicity of numbers as Being is the principle of all manifestation.

However one considers zero, it cannot in any case be pure nothingness: this is all too obvious when it comes to the indefinitely small; it is true that this is, if you will, only a derived meaning, due to a kind of approximate assimilation of a quantity negligible for us to the absence of all quantity; but, with regard to the very absence of quantity, what is zero in this respect may very well not be so in other respects, as can be clearly seen by an example such as that of the point, which is unextended, that is to say spatially zero, but which is nonetheless, as we have explained elsewhere, the very principle of all extension. It is indeed truly strange that mathematicians are accustomed to considering zero as pure nothingness, and yet find it impossible for them not to regard it at the same time as possessing an indefinite power, since, placed to the right of another so-called significant digit, it contributes to forming the representation of a number which, through the repetition of this same zero, can grow indefinitely, as is the case, for example, with the number ten and its successive powers. If zero were truly nothingness, this could not be the case, and it would then be nothing more than a useless sign, entirely devoid of any effective value. Thus, there is yet another inconsistency to add to all those we have already noted.

If we return to zero, considered as representing the indefinitely small, what is most important to remember is that its domain, in the doubly indefinite sequence of numbers, includes everything that is beyond our means of evaluation in a certain sense, just as the domain of the indefinitely large includes, in the same sequence, everything that is beyond these same means of evaluation in the other sense. This being the case, there is obviously no reason to speak of numbers less than zero, any more than of numbers greater than the infinite; and this is even more unacceptable, if possible, when zero represents purely and simply the absence of any quantity, because a quantity that would be less than nothing is truly inconceivable. However, this is what was intended, albeit in a slightly different sense than we indicated, by introducing the consideration of so-called negative numbers into mathematics, and forgetting that these numbers, originally, are nothing more than an indication of the result of a a truly impossible subtraction, by which a

larger number would have to be subtracted from a smaller number; but this consideration of negative numbers and the logically questionable consequences that it entails still require some further explanation.
(*to be continued*)

March 1937

ON ‘CEREMONIAL MAGIC’

In speaking of ceremonies and in marking their essential difference from rites, we have intentionally set aside a fairly special sense, that in which it is a question of “magical ceremonies”; and although, strictly speaking, we have already explained ourselves often enough on what must be understood by the term “magic”, it will perhaps not be useless to return to it once again on this occasion, for we see it incessantly applied indiscriminately to the most diverse things, and sometimes without the slightest relation to what it really designates. Everything that seems more or less bizarre, everything that departs from the ordinary (or from what one has agreed to consider as such), is “magic” for some; and even, in vulgar language, the word has ended by scarcely having any other meaning than that. For others, “magic” takes on the appearance of something rather “literary”, somewhat in the way one also commonly speaks of the “magic of style”; and it is especially poetry (or at least a certain poetry, if not all poetry indiscriminately) to which they wish to attribute this character. In this latter case, there is perhaps a less gross confusion, but one which it is all the more important to dispel: it is true that poetry, at its origins and before it had degenerated into a simple “literature” and into the expression of a pure individual fantasy, was something altogether different, the notion of which can, in sum, be directly connected to that of mantras; there could therefore really be at that time a magical poetry, just as well as a poetry destined to produce effects of a higher order; but from the moment when, on the contrary, it is a question of profane poetry (and it is indeed this one that the moderns inevitably have in view, since, even when they happen to find themselves in the presence of the other, they do not know how to distinguish it and still believe they are dealing only with “literature”), there can no longer be any question of anything of the kind, nor either—

whatever may be said (and this is yet another abuse of language)—of "inspiration" in the true "supra-human" sense of this word. We do not contest, of course, that profane poetry, like moreover any expression whatsoever of ideas or sentiments, may produce psychological effects; but that is an entirely different question and, precisely, has absolutely nothing to do with magic; nevertheless, this point must be retained, for there may be here the source of a confusion which, in this case, would simply be correlative to another error that the moderns frequently commit as well regarding the very nature of magic itself, and to which we shall have to return later on.

That said, we shall recall that magic is properly a science; one may even say a "physical" science in the etymological sense of this word, since it is a question of laws and of the production of certain phenomena; only, it is important to specify that the forces which intervene belong to the subtle order and not to the corporeal order; and it is in this that it would be completely false to wish to assimilate this science to "physics" taken in the restricted sense in which the moderns understand it; moreover, this error is also encountered in fact, since some have believed they could relate magical phenomena to electricity or to whatever "radiations". Now, if magic has this character of science, one will perhaps ask how it can be possible that there be question of magical rites, and this must indeed be quite embarrassing for the moderns, given the idea they form of sciences; where they see rites, they think that it is necessarily a question of something altogether different, which they hasten always to identify more or less completely with religion; but let us say at once that magical rites have in reality, as to their proper end, no point in common with religious rites, nor moreover (and we would even be tempted to say all the more so) with initiatic rites, as would have it, on the other hand, the partisans of certain "pseudo-initiatic" conceptions that are current in our time; and yet, although they are entirely outside these categories, there are indeed truly magical rites.

The explanation is very simple at bottom: magic is a science, as we have just said, but a traditional science; now, in everything that presents this character, whether it be a question of sciences, arts, or crafts, there is

always—or at least as soon as it is not a question of purely theoretical studies—something which, if one understands it well, must be considered as constituting veritable rites; and there is no reason to be astonished at this, for every action accomplished according to traditional rules, of whatever domain it may pertain to, is really a ritual action, as we have already indicated in our preceding article. Naturally, these rites must, in each case, be of a special kind, their "technique" being necessarily appropriate to the particular end for which they are destined; this is why one must carefully avoid every confusion and every false assimilation such as those we have mentioned, and this as much with regard to the rites themselves as with regard to the different domains to which they respectively relate, the two things being moreover closely interdependent; and magical rites are thus nothing more than one species among many others, on the same footing as, for example, medical rites, which must also appear, in the eyes of the moderns, as something very extraordinary and even quite incomprehensible, but whose existence in traditional civilizations is no less an incontestable fact.

Now, it is appropriate to add that magic is, among traditional sciences, one of those that belong to the lowest order, for it is clearly understood that here everything must be considered as strictly hierarchized according to its nature and its proper domain; doubtless it is for this reason that it is perhaps more than any other subject to many deviations and degenerations. It sometimes happens that it takes on a development out of all proportion to its real importance, going so far as to stifle, as it were, higher and more worthy knowledges, and certain ancient civilizations died of this encroachment of magic, just as modern civilization risks dying of that of profane science, which moreover represents an even graver deviation, since magic, despite everything, is still a traditional knowledge. Sometimes also it survives, so to speak, itself, under the aspect of vestiges more or less shapeless and misunderstood, but still capable of giving some effective results, and it can then fall to the level of the lowest sorcery, which is the most common and the most widespread case, or degenerate yet in some other manner. Up to now, we have not spoken of ceremonies, but it is precisely there that we are now coming, for they constitute the proper

characteristic of one of these degenerations of magic, to the point that this one has even received from it its very designation of “ceremonial magic”.

Occultists would assuredly be little disposed to admit that this “ceremonial magic”, the only one they know and that they try to practice, is nothing but a degenerated magic, and yet it is so; and even, without wishing in any way to assimilate it to sorcery, we could say that it is still more degenerated than the latter in certain respects. Let us explain ourselves more clearly on this subject: the sorcerer accomplishes certain rites and pronounces certain formulas, generally without understanding their meaning, but contenting himself with repeating as exactly as possible what has been taught to him by those who transmitted them to him (this is a particularly important point); and these rites and these formulas, which are most often nothing but remains more or less disfigured of very ancient things, and which are certainly not accompanied by any ceremony, nevertheless have, in many cases, a certain efficacy (we have here to make no distinction between the beneficent or maleficent intentions that may preside over their use, since it is only a question of the reality of the effects obtained). On the other hand, the occultist who engages in “ceremonial magic” generally obtains no serious result, however much care he may take to conform to a multitude of minute and complicated prescriptions, which moreover he has learned only through the study of books, and not at all by the fact of any transmission whatsoever; it may happen that he sometimes deludes himself, but that is quite another matter: and one could say that there is, between the practices of the sorcerer and his own, the same difference as between a living thing, even if it were in a state of decrepitude, and a thing that is artificial.

This failure of the “magist” (since that is the word the occultists prefer to use, doubtless deeming it more honorable and less vulgar than that of “magician”) has a double reason: on the one hand, insofar as it can still be a question of rites in such a case, he simulates them rather than truly accomplishing them, since he lacks the transmission that would be necessary to “vivify” them, and to which mere intention could in no way

supply; on the other hand, these rites are literally smothered under the empty formalism of ceremonies, for, incapable of discerning the essential from the accidental (and the books to which he refers will moreover be far from helping him in this regard, since everything is ordinarily mixed there inextricably, perhaps voluntarily in certain cases and involuntarily in others), the "magist" will naturally attach himself above all to the exterior aspect which strikes him more and which is the most "impressive", and this is, in sum, what justifies the very name of "ceremonial magic". In fact, most of those who thus believe they are "doing magic" do in reality nothing more or other than purely and simply auto-suggesting themselves: what is curious here is that ceremonies manage to impose themselves not only on spectators, if there are any, but on those very ones who accomplish them, and who, when they are sincere (we have presently to concern ourselves only with these cases, and not with that in which charlatanism intervenes), are truly, in the manner of children, dupes of their own game. These therefore obtain, and can obtain, only effects of an exclusively psychological order, that is to say of the same nature as those produced by ceremonies in general, and which are moreover, at bottom, the whole reason for the existence of these latter; but even if they have remained sufficiently conscious of what takes place in them and around them to realize that everything is reduced to that, they are far from suspecting that, if it is so, it is only by reason of their incapacity and their ignorance. Then they ingeniously construct theories, in accord with the most modern conceptions, and thereby directly rejoining, whether they wish it or not, those of "official science" itself, to explain that magic and its effects pertain entirely to the psychological domain, as others do also for rites in general; the misfortune is that what they are speaking of is not magic, from the point of view of which such effects are perfectly null and nonexistent, and that, confusing rites with ceremonies, they also confuse reality with what is only a caricature or a parody of it; if the "magists" themselves are at this point, how can one be astonished that similar confusions are current among the "general public"?

These remarks will suffice, on the one hand, to relate the case of magical ceremonies to what we have previously said of ceremonies in general,

and, on the other hand, to show from where some of the principal modern errors concerning magic originate. Assuredly, “doing magic”, even in the most authentic manner possible, is not an occupation that seems to us very worthy of interest in itself; but we must nevertheless recognize that it is a science whose results, whatever one may think of their value, are just as real in their order as those of any other science, and have nothing in common with psychological illusions or reveries. One must at the very least know how to determine the true nature of each thing and situate it in the place that suits it; but it is precisely this of which most of our contemporaries show themselves completely incapable, and what we would readily call “psychologism”, that is to say this tendency to reduce everything to psychological interpretations, of which we have here a very clear example, is not, among the characteristic manifestations of their mentality, one of the least singular nor of the least significance.

REMARKS ON MATHEMATICAL NOTATION

(continued)[1]

Considering negative numbersThis stems solely, in essence, from the fact that, when a subtraction is arithmetically impossible, its result is nevertheless open to interpretation when that subtraction relates to quantities that can be measured in two opposite directions, such as distances or times. Hence the geometric representation usually given to these negative numbers: distances are counted on a straight line as positive or negative depending on whether they are traveled in one direction or the other, and a point is fixed on this line as the origin, from which distances are said to be positive on one side and negative on the other, the origin itself being assigned the coefficient zero; the coefficient of each point on the line will therefore be the number representing its distance from the origin, and its sign + or - will simply indicate which side this point is located on in relation to it; on a circumference, one can similarly distinguish a positive direction and a negative direction of rotation, which would give rise to analogous remarks. Moreover, since the line is indefinite in both directions, we are led to consider a positive indefinite and a negative indefinite, which we represent by the signs + and -, and which we commonly designate by the absurd expressions "plus infinity" and "minus infinity"; we wonder what a negative infinity could be, or what might remain if infinity were subtracted from something or nothing (since mathematicians regard zero as nothing); These are the kinds of things that, when stated in clear language, immediately reveal that they are devoid of any meaning. It must also be added that we are then led, particularly in the study of the variation of functions, to regard the negative indefinite as coinciding with the positive indefinite, such that a moving object starting from the origin and constantly moving away from it in the positive direction would return to it from the negative side, if its movement continued for an indefinite time, or vice versa, from which it follows that the straight line,

or what is considered as such, must in reality be a closed line, although indefinite. It could also be shown that the properties of a straight line in the plane are entirely analogous to those of a great circle on the surface of a sphere, and that thus the plane and the straight line can be assimilated to a sphere and a great circle of indefinitely large radius (the ordinary circles of the plane then being the small circles of this same sphere); without dwelling on it further, we will only note that we grasp here, in a way, directly the very limits of spatial indefiniteness; how then, in all this, can we, if we want to maintain some semblance of logic still talk about infinity? Considering positive and negative numbers as we have just said, the series of numbers takes the following form:

$$-\infty \ldots -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 \ldots +\infty,$$

The order of these numbers is the same as that of the corresponding points on the line, that is, the points that have these same numbers as their respective coefficients. This series, although also indefinite in both directions, is quite different from the one we considered previously: it is symmetrical, no longer with respect to 1, but with respect to 0, which corresponds to the origin of distances; and two numbers equidistant from this central term 0 reproduce it again, but by “algebraic” addition (that is, performed taking into account their signs, which here is arithmetically a subtraction), and no longer by multiplication. One can immediately see a drawback that inevitably results from the artificial (we do not say arbitrary) nature of this notation: if one places unity at the starting point, the entire sequence of numbers follows naturally from it; but, if one places zero, it is, on the contrary, impossible to derive any number from it. The reason for this is that the constitution of the series is then based in reality on considerations of a geometric order much more than on arithmetic ones, and that, as a consequence of the difference in nature of the quantities to which these two branches of mathematics respectively refer, there can never, as we have already said, be a rigorously perfect correspondence between arithmetic and geometry. Furthermore, this new series is in no way, as the previous one was, indefinitely increasing in one direction and indefinitely decreasing in the other, or at least, if one claims to consider it as such, it is only

through a most incorrect “figure of speech”; in reality, it is indefinitely increasing in both directions equally, since what it comprises, on both sides of the central zero, the same sequence of integers; what is called the “absolute value” (yet another rather strange expression, since what is in question is never anything but essentially relative) must be considered solely from a purely quantitative standpoint, and positive or negative signs change nothing in this respect, for they express nothing other than the “positional” relations we explained earlier. The negative indefinite is therefore in no way comparable to the indefinitely small; on the contrary, it is, just like the positive indefinite, indefinitely large. The only difference is that it expands in a different direction, which is perfectly conceivable when dealing with spatial or temporal quantities, but completely meaningless for arithmetic quantities, for which such an expansion is necessarily unique, being none other than that of the sequence of integers itself. Negative numbers are by no means “less than zero” numbers, which is in fact a pure and simple impossibility, and the sign with which they are affected cannot reverse the order in which they are arranged with regard to their magnitude; moreover, to realize this as clearly as possible, it suffices to note that the point with a coefficient − 2, for example, is further from the origin than the point with a coefficient − 1, and not less far as it would necessarily be if the number − 2 were actually smaller than the number − 1; in truth, it is not the distances themselves, insofar as they are objects of measurement, that can be qualified as negative, but only the direction in which they are traversed; these are two entirely different things, and it is their confusion that is at the very source of a large part of the logical difficulties that this notation of negative numbers entails. Among the other bizarre or illogical consequences of this same notation, we will point out the consideration, introduced by t he resolution of algebraic equations, of so-called “imaginary” quantities; these are presented as roots of negative numbers, which still only corresponds to an impossibility; it is possible, however, that if they were understood in another sense, they might correspond to something real; but, in any case, their theory and its application to analytic geometry, as presented by current mathematicians, appear little more than a veritable web of confusions and even absurdities, and as the product of a need for

excessive and artificial generalizations, which does not even shy away from stating manifestly contradictory propositions; certain theorems on the "asymptotes of the circle," for example, would amply suffice to prove that we are not exaggerating anything. It may be said, it is true, that this is not geometry properly speaking, but merely algebra translated into geometric language; But what is truly serious is that, because such a translation, as well as its inverse, is possible to a certain extent, it is extended to cases where it is no longer meaningful at all. This is indeed a symptom of an extraordinary confusion of ideas, as well as the extreme culmination of a "conventionalism" that goes so far as to cause a complete loss of all sense of reality. And that's not all. Finally, we will discuss the consequences, also quite debatable, of using negative numbers from the perspective of mechanics. Mechanics, moreover, is in reality, by its very nature, a physical science, and the very act of treating it as an integral part of mathematics inevitably introduces certain distortions. Let us simply say, in this regard, that the so-called "principles" upon which modern mathematicians base this science as they conceive it (and, among the various abuses made of the word "principles," this one is not the least noteworthy) are properly nothing more than hypotheses, more or less well-founded, or, in the most favorable case, mere laws that are more or less general, perhaps more general than others, but which can at best only be applications, to a very specific domain, of true universal principles. Without going into too much detail, we will cite, as an example of the first case, the so-called "principle of inertia," which is justified by nothing, neither by experience, which shows on the contrary that there is no inertia anywhere in nature, nor by the understanding, which cannot conceive of this supposed inertia, since it can only consist in the complete absence of any property; one could, strictly speaking, apply such a word to pure potentiality, but the latter is certainly something quite different from the quantified and qualified "matter" that physicists consider. An example of the second case is what is called the "principle of equality of action and reaction," which is so little a "principle" that it is immediately deduced from the general law of the equilibrium of natural forces: whenever this equilibrium is broken in any way, it immediately tends to re-establish itself, resulting in a reaction whose intensity is

equivalent to that of the action that provoked it; this is therefore only a simple particular case of "concordant actions and reactions," which do not concern the corporeal world alone, but rather the whole of manifestation in all its modes and in all its states; and it is precisely on this question of equilibrium that we must insist a little more. Two forces that are in equilibrium are usually represented by two opposite "vectors," that is to say, by two straight line segments of equal length, but directed in opposite directions: if two forces applied at the same point have the same intensity and the same direction, but in opposite directions, they are in equilibrium; Since they are then without action on their point of application, it is even said that they destroy themselves, without considering that if one of these forces is removed, the other acts immediately, which proves that it was not destroyed in reality at all. Forces are characterized by coefficients proportional to their respective intensities, and two forces of opposite direction are assigned coefficients of different signs, one positive and the other negative: one being f, the other will be $-f'$. In the case we have just considered, the two forces having the same intensity, the coefficients that characterize them must be equal "in absolute value", and we have: $f = f'$, from which we deduce as a condition of equilibrium: $f - f' = 0$, that is to say that the sum of the two forces, or of the two "vectors" that represent them, is zero, so that equilibrium is thus defined by zero. Since mathematicians mistakenly view zero as a kind of symbol of nothingness (as if nothingness could be symbolized by something), it seems to follow that equilibrium is a state of non-existence, which is a rather peculiar consequence. It is perhaps even for this reason that, instead of saying that two forces in equilibrium neutralize each other, which would be accurate, we say that they destroy each other, which is contrary to reality, as we have just demonstrated with a very simple observation. The true concept of equilibrium is quite different: to understand it, one need only note that all natural forces (and not just mechanical forces, which, let us reiterate, are nothing more than a very particular case) are either attractive or repulsive; the former can be considered compressive or contractive forces, the latter expansive or dilatory forces. It is easy to understand that, in a initially homogeneous medium, any compression occurring at one point will necessarily correspond at another point

to an equivalent expansion, and vice versa, so that one must always consider two centers of force correlatively, one of which cannot exist without the other; this is what can be called the law of polarity, which is applicable to all natural phenomena, because it derives from the duality of the very principles that govern all manifestation, and which, in the domain concerned by physicists, is especially evident in electrical and magnetic phenomena. If now two forces, one compressive and the other expansive, act on the same point, the condition for them to be in equilibrium or to cancel each other out, that is to say, for neither contraction nor dilation to occur at that point, is that the intensities of these two forces be, we will not say equal, since they are of different kinds, but equivalent. Forces can be characterized by coefficients proportional to the contraction or dilation they produce, such that, if we consider a compressive force and an expansive force, the first will be affected by a coefficient $n > 1$, and the second by a coefficient $n' < 1$; Each of these coefficients can be the ratio of the density that the surrounding medium assumes at the point considered, under the action of the corresponding force, to the initial density of that same medium, assumed to be homogeneous when it is not subjected to any force, by virtue of a simple application of the principle of sufficient ratio. When neither compression nor expansion occurs, this ratio is necessarily equal to one, since the density of the medium is not modified; for two forces acting at a point to be in equilibrium, their resultant must therefore have a coefficient of one. It is easy to see that the coefficient of this resultant is the product (and no longer the sum as in the “classical” conception) of the coefficients of the two forces considered; these two coefficients n and n' must therefore be two numbers inversely proportional to each other: $n' = 1 / n$ and the condition for equilibrium will be: $nn' = 1$; Thus, equilibrium will be defined not by zero, but by unity. We see that this definition of equilibrium by unity, which is the only real one, corresponds to the fact that unity occupies the middle ground in the doubly indefinite sequence of integers and their inverses, while this central place is somehow usurped by zero in the artificial sequence of positive and negative numbers. Far from being the state of non-existence, equilibrium is, on the contrary, existence considered in itself, independently of its secondary and multiple

manifestations; it is, moreover, well understood that this is not Non-Being, in the metaphysical sense of the word, for existence, even in this primordial and undifferentiated state, is still only the starting point of all differentiated manifestations, just as unity is the starting point of all the multiplicity of numbers. This unity, as we have just considered it, and in which equilibrium resides, is what the Far Eastern tradition calls the “Invariable Mean”; And, following this same tradition, this balance or harmony is, at the center of each state and each modality of being, the reflection of the “Activity of Heaven.” In concluding this study, which makes no claim to be complete, we will draw a “practical” conclusion; it shows quite explicitly why the conceptions of modern mathematicians cannot inspire us with more respect than those of the representatives of any other secular science; their opinions and views cannot therefore carry any weight in our eyes, and we have no need whatsoever to take them into account in the assessments we may have occasion to formulate on this or that theory, assessments which, in this field as in any other, can, for us, be based solely on the data of traditional knowledge.

April 1937

AGAINST THE MIXING OF TRADITIONAL FORMS

According to Hindu tradition, there are two opposed ways, one inferior and the other superior, of being outside the castes: one can be “without caste” (avarna), in the privative sense, that is to say below them; and one can, on the contrary, be “beyond the castes” (ativarna) or above them, although this second case is incomparably rarer than the first, especially under the conditions of the present age.

In an analogous manner, one can also be on this side of or beyond traditional forms: the “irreligious” man, for example, such as is commonly encountered in the modern Western world, is unquestionably in the first case; the second, on the contrary, applies exclusively to those who have effectively become conscious of the fundamental unity and identity of all traditions; and here again, this second case can at present only be very exceptional. It should moreover be well understood that, in speaking of effective consciousness, we mean by this that notions that are merely theoretical concerning this unity and this identity, although assuredly far from negligible, are altogether insufficient for someone to be able to consider that he has passed beyond the stage at which it is necessary to adhere to a determined form and to hold to it strictly.

This, of course, in no way means that one who is in this case should not at the same time strive to understand the other forms as completely and as profoundly as possible, but only that, practically, he must not make use of ritual or other means properly belonging to several different forms, which would be not only useless and vain, but even harmful and dangerous in various respects.

Traditional forms may be compared to paths that all lead to the same

goal, but which, as paths, are nonetheless distinct; it is evident that one cannot follow several of them at the same time, and that, once one has entered upon one of them, it is appropriate to follow it to the end without departing from it, for wishing to pass from one to another would be the surest way not to advance in reality, if not even to risk going completely astray.

Only he who has reached the end thereby dominates all the paths, and this because he no longer has to follow them; he may therefore, if need be, practice all the forms indiscriminately, but precisely because he has gone beyond them and because, for him, they are henceforth unified in their common principle. Generally, moreover, he will then continue outwardly to adhere to a defined form, if only by way of "example" for those who have not reached the same point as he; but if particular circumstances come to require it, he may just as well participate in other forms, since, from the point at which he stands, there is no longer between them any real difference.

Moreover, once these forms are thus unified for him, there can no longer in any way be any mixture or confusion therein, which necessarily presupposes the existence of diversity as such; and, once again, it is only a matter of him who is effectively beyond this diversity: the forms, for him, no longer have the character of paths or means, of which he has no further need, and they subsist only as expressions of the one Truth—expressions of which it is just as legitimate to make use according to circumstances as it is to speak different languages in order to make oneself understood by those whom one addresses.

There is therefore, in sum, between this case and that of an illegitimate mixing of traditional forms, the entire difference that we have indicated on other occasions, and in an entirely general manner, as being that between "synthesis" and "syncretism." Indeed, one who envisages all forms in the very unity of their principle, as we have just said, thereby has an essentially synthetic view of them, in the most rigorous sense of the word; he can place himself only equally within all of them, and even, we should say, at the point that is for all of them the most interior,

since it is truly their common center.

To return to the comparison we used earlier, all the paths, starting from different points, draw closer and closer together while nevertheless always remaining distinct, until they finally arrive at this unique center; but, seen from the center itself, they are no longer in reality anything but so many rays that emanate from it and by which it is in relation with the multiple points of the circumference. These two senses, inverse to one another, in which the same paths may be envisaged, correspond very exactly to the respective points of view of one who is "on the way" toward the center and of one who has arrived there, whose states, precisely, are often described in traditional symbolism as those of the "traveler" and of the "sedentary."

The latter is also comparable to one who, standing at the summit of a mountain, sees equally, and without having to move, its different slopes, whereas one who climbs this same mountain sees only the part nearest to him; and it is quite evident that the view of the first alone can be called synthetic.

On the other hand, one who is not at the center is necessarily always in a more or less "exterior" position, even with respect to his own traditional form, and all the more so with respect to others; if therefore he wishes, for example, to perform rites belonging to several different forms, claiming to use them concurrently as means or "supports" of his spiritual development, he can in reality only associate them thus "from the outside," which amounts to saying that what he does will be nothing other than "syncretism," since the latter consists precisely in such a mixing of disparate elements that nothing truly unifies.

Everything we have said elsewhere against "syncretism" in general therefore applies in this particular case, and even, one might say, with certain aggravations: as long as it is only a matter of theories, it can indeed, while being perfectly insignificant and illusory and representing only an effort expended in pure loss, still be relatively harmless; but here, through the direct contact that is implied with realities of a deeper

order, it risks entailing, for one who acts thus, a deviation or a stoppage of that interior development for which he believed, quite wrongly, that he was thereby procuring greater facilities.

Such a case is quite comparable to that of someone who, under the pretext of obtaining a cure more surely, would employ at the same time several medications whose effects would only neutralize and destroy one another, and which might even, at times, have between them unforeseen reactions more or less dangerous for the organism; there are things each of which is effective when one makes use of it separately, but which are nonetheless radically incompatible.

This brings us to specify yet another point: that, in addition to the properly doctrinal reason that opposes the validity of any mixing of traditional forms, there is a consideration which, while being of a more contingent order, is nonetheless very important from the point of view that one may call “technical.”

Indeed, supposing that someone finds himself in the required conditions to perform rites belonging to several forms in such a way that both the one and the other have real effects—which naturally implies that he has at least some effective ties with each of these forms—it may occur, and indeed will almost inevitably occur in most cases, that these rites will bring into action psychic influences which, not harmonizing with one another, will clash and provoke a state of disorder and imbalance affecting more or less seriously the one who will have imprudently aroused them; one readily understands that such a danger is one to which it is not appropriate to expose oneself inconsiderately.

The clash of psychic influences is moreover particularly to be feared, on the one hand, as a consequence of the most exterior rites, of those that belong to the exoteric side of different traditions, since it is evidently under this aspect especially that these present themselves as exclusive of one another, the divergence of the paths being all the greater the farther one considers them from the center; and, on the other hand, although this may seem paradoxical to one who does not reflect on it sufficiently,

the opposition is all the more violent the more common characteristics the traditions to which appeal is made possess, as, for example, in the case of those that exoterically assume the religious form, for things that are much more different enter into conflict with one another only with difficulty, by virtue of that very difference: there can be struggle only on the condition of placing oneself on the same terrain.

We prefer not to insist further on this, but we wish that this warning may suffice for those who would be tempted to put such discordant means into operation: let them not forget that the purely spiritual domain is the only one in which one is sheltered from all harm, because even oppositions no longer have any meaning there, and that, so long as the psychic domain has not been completely and definitively surpassed, the worst mishaps always remain possible, even—and we should perhaps say especially—for those who too resolutely make a profession of not believing in them.

THE TETRAKTYS AND THE SQUARE OF FOUR

In the course of our previous study, we were led, in connection with mathematical notation, to make an allusion to the Pythagorean Tetraktys, and we then indicated its numerical formula:
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10,
showing the relation that directly unites the denary to the quaternary. One knows, moreover, the entirely particular importance attached to it by the Pythagoreans, which was expressed notably by the fact that they swore an oath “by the holy Tetraktys”; it has perhaps been less remarked that they also had another formula of oath, which was “by the square of four”; and there is between the two an evident relationship, for the number four is, one might say, their common base.

One could deduce from this, among other consequences, that Pythagorean doctrine must have presented itself with a character that was more “cosmological” than purely metaphysical, which is, moreover, not an exceptional case when one is dealing with Western traditions, since we have already had occasion to make an analogous remark concerning Hermeticism. The reason for this deduction, which may seem strange at first sight to one who is not accustomed to the use of numerical symbolism, is that the quaternary is everywhere and always considered as being properly the number of universal manifestation; it therefore marks, in this respect, the very point of departure of “cosmology”, whereas the numbers that precede it, that is to say unity, the binary, and the ternary, relate strictly to “ontology”; the more particular emphasis placed on the quaternary thus corresponds indeed to that of the “cosmological” point of view itself.

At the beginning of the Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, the four terms of the fundamental quaternary are enumerated as follows:
1° the Principle, which is designated as al-Bāri’, the “Creator” (which indicates that it is not a question of the Supreme Principle, but only of

Being, insofar as it is the first principle of manifestation, which moreover is indeed metaphysical Unity);
2° the Universal Spirit;
3° the Universal Soul;
4° primordial Hylē.

We shall not at present develop the different points of view from which these terms might be envisaged; one could in particular make them correspond respectively to the four "worlds" of Hebrew Kabbalah, which also have their exact equivalent in Islamic esoterism. What matters for the moment is that the quaternary thus constituted is regarded as presupposed by manifestation, in the sense that the presence of all its terms is necessary for the complete development of the possibilities that this manifestation comprises; and, it is added, this is why, in the order of manifested things, one always finds in a special manner the mark (one might say, in a way, the "signature") of the quaternary: hence, for example, the four elements (Ether not being counted here, since it is a question only of the "differentiated" elements), the four cardinal points (or the four regions of space corresponding to them, with the four "pillars" of the world), the four phases into which every cycle naturally divides (the ages of human life, the seasons in the annual cycle, the lunar phases in the monthly cycle, etc.), and so on; one could thus establish an indefinite multitude of applications of the quaternary, all of them moreover linked together by rigorous analogical correspondences, for they are, at bottom, only so many more or less special aspects of a single general "schema" of manifestation.

This "schema", in its geometric form, is one of the most widespread symbols, one of those that are truly common to all traditions: it is the circle divided into four equal parts by a cross formed by two rectangular diameters; and one may at once remark that this figure expresses precisely the relation of the quaternary and the denary, just as the formula we recalled at the beginning expresses it in numerical form. Indeed, the quaternary is represented geometrically by the square, if one envisages it under the "static" aspect, but under the "dynamic" aspect,

as is the case here, it is represented by the cross; the latter, when it turns around its center, generates the circumference, which, together with the center, represents the denary, which is, as we have said previously, the complete numerical cycle.

This is what is called the “circling of the quadrant”, the geometric representation of what the formula
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10
expresses arithmetically; inversely, the Hermetic problem of the “squaring of the circle” (an expression so poorly understood ordinarily) is nothing other than what is represented by the quaternary division of the circle, supposed to be given first of all, by two rectangular diameters, and it will be expressed numerically by the same formula, but written in inverse sense:
10 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4,
to show that the entire development of manifestation is thus brought back to the fundamental quaternary.

That being said, let us return to the relation between the Tetraktys and the square of four: the numbers 10 and 16 occupy the same rank, the fourth, respectively in the series of triangular numbers and in that of square numbers. One knows that triangular numbers are the numbers obtained by taking the sum of consecutive integers from unity up to each of the successive terms of the series; unity itself is the first triangular number, just as it is also the first square number, for, being the principle and origin of the series of integers, it must equally be so for all the other series that are thus derived from it.

The second triangular number is 1 + 2 = 3, which moreover shows that, as soon as unity has produced the binary by its own polarization, one immediately has the ternary thereby; and the geometric representation of this is evident: 1 corresponds to the apex of the triangle, 2 to the extremities of its base, and the triangle itself, taken as a whole, is naturally the figure of the number 3.

If one then considers the three terms of the ternary as having an

independent existence, their sum gives the third triangular number:
1 + 2 + 3 = 6;
this senary number being the double of the ternary, one may say that it implies a new ternary which is a reflection of the first, as in the well-known symbol of the “Seal of Solomon”; but this could give rise to other considerations that would lie outside our subject.

Continuing the series, one has, for the fourth triangular number,
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10,
that is to say, the Tetraktys; and one sees thereby, as we have already explained, that the quaternary contains in a certain way all numbers, since it contains the denary; whence the formula of the Tao-te-Ching that we cited previously: “one produced two, two produced three, three produced all numbers,” which amounts again to saying that all manifestation is, as it were, enveloped in the quaternary, or, inversely, that the latter constitutes the complete base of its integral development.

The Tetraktys, insofar as it is a triangular number, was naturally represented by a symbol that was ternary in form as a whole, each of its outer sides comprising four elements; and this symbol was composed in all of ten elements, represented by as many points, nine of which were thus on the perimeter of the triangle and one at its center. One will remark that one finds again in this arrangement, despite the difference of geometric forms, the equivalent of what we have indicated concerning the representation of the denary by the circle, since there also 1 corresponds to the center and 9 to the circumference.

Let us also note in passing, in this connection, that it is because 9, and not 10, is the number of the “circumference”, that the division of the latter is normally carried out according to multiples of 9 (90 degrees for the quadrant, and consequently 360° for the entire circumference), which moreover is in direct relation with the whole question of “cyclic numbers”.

The square of four is, geometrically, a square whose sides comprise four elements, like those of the triangle of which we have just spoken; if one

considers the sides themselves as measured by the number of these elements, it results that the sides of the triangle and those of the square will be equal. One can then unite the two figures by making the base of the triangle coincide with the upper side of the square, as in the adjacent diagram (in which we have marked the points, for greater clarity, not on the sides themselves, but inside the figures, which makes it possible to count distinctly those that belong respectively to the triangle and to the square); and the ensemble thus obtained again gives rise to several important remarks.

First of all, if one considers only the triangle and the square as such, this ensemble is a geometric representation of the septenary, insofar as the latter is the sum of the ternary and the quaternary:
3 + 4 = 7;
one may say more precisely, according to the very disposition of the figure, that this septenary is formed by the union of a superior ternary and an inferior quaternary, which is susceptible of diverse applications.

For our part, confining ourselves to what concerns us more particularly here, it will suffice to say that, in the correspondence of triangular numbers and square numbers, the former must be related to a higher domain than the latter, whence one may infer that, in Pythagorean symbolism, the Tetraktys must have had a superior role to that of the square of four; and, in fact, all that is known of it appears to indicate that this was indeed really so.

Now, there is something else more singular, and which, although referring to a different traditional form, can certainly not be regarded as a simple “coincidence”: the two numbers 10 and 16, contained respectively in the triangle and in the square, have for their sum 26; now this number 26 is the total numerical value of the letters forming the Hebrew Tetragrammaton. Moreover, 10 is the value of the first letter, and 16 is that of the ensemble of the three other letters; this division of the Tetragrammaton is perfectly normal, and the correspondence of its two parts is again very significant: the Tetraktys is thus identified with the first letter in the triangle, while the remainder of the Tetragrammaton

is inscribed in the square placed beneath it.

On the other hand, the triangle and the square both contain four lines of points; it is to be noted, although this in sum has only a secondary importance, and only in order once again to mark the concordances of different traditional sciences, that the four lines of points are found again in the figures of geomancy, figures which moreover, by the quaternary combinations of 1 and 2, are sixteen in number; and geomancy, as its name indicates, is in special relation with the earth, which, according to Far-Eastern tradition, is symbolized by the square form.

Finally, if one considers the solid forms corresponding, in three-dimensional geometry, to the plane figures in question, to the square corresponds a cube, and to the triangle a quadrangular pyramid having for its base the upper face of this cube; the ensemble forms what Masonic symbolism designates as the “pointed cubic stone”, which, in Hermetic interpretation, is regarded as a figure of the “philosophers’ stone”. There are still, with regard to this last symbol, other remarks to be made; but, as they no longer have any relation to the question of the Tetraktys, it will be preferable to consider them separately in another article

May 1937

INITIATION AND "PASSIVITY"

We have often noted, among those who claim to set themselves up as adversaries of esoterism, a regrettable tendency to confuse it with its counterfeits, and, consequently, to include within the same attacks things that are in reality the most different, even the most opposed. Here again, there is evidently an example of modern incomprehension; ignorance of everything that touches the esoteric and initiatic domain is so complete and so widespread in our time that one cannot be astonished at anything in this regard, and this can be an excuse, in many cases, for those who act in this way; nevertheless, we are sometimes tempted to ask ourselves whether this is truly a sufficient explanation for one who wishes to go more deeply into things. First of all, it goes without saying that this incomprehension and this ignorance themselves fall within the "plan" for the destruction of every traditional idea that has been pursued throughout the entire modern period, and that, consequently, they can only be willed and maintained by the "influences" that are working toward this destruction; but, beyond this general consideration, it seems that there is still, in what we are alluding to, something that responds to a more precise and more clearly defined design. Indeed, when one sees initiation deliberately confused with "pseudo-initiation" and even with "counter-initiation," with everything mixed together in so inextricable a manner that no one can any longer recognize himself in it, it is truly very difficult not to ask oneself who or what profits from all these confusions.

Naturally, it is not a question of good or bad faith that we wish to raise here; moreover, it would have only a very secondary importance, for the harmfulness of the false ideas that are thus spread is neither increased nor diminished by it; and it is quite possible that the very bias shown by some is due solely to the fact that they obey unconsciously some

suggestion. What must be concluded from this is that the enemies of initiatic tradition do not make dupes only among those whom they draw into the organizations that they "control" directly or indirectly, and that even those who believe they are combating them are sometimes, in fact, instruments just as useful, although in another way, for the ends they propose. It is doubly advantageous for "counter-initiation," when it cannot succeed in completely dissimulating its procedures and its aims, to have both attributed to true initiation, since thereby it incontestably harms the latter, and, at the same time, diverts the danger that threatens itself by misleading minds that might find themselves on the path of certain discoveries.

These reflections occurred to us once again on the occasion of a book published recently in England by a former member of certain organizations of a particularly suspect character; we mean organizations that are "pseudo-initiatic" and among those in which the mark of an influence of "counter-initiation" is most clearly distinguished. Although he has left them and has even openly turned against them, he nevertheless remains strongly affected by the teaching he received there, and this is especially visible in the conception he forms of initiation. This conception is strange enough to merit being noted more particularly; it serves as the guiding idea of what purports to be a history of initiatic organizations, or so-called such, from antiquity to our days, a history eminently fanciful, where everything is confused in the manner we mentioned earlier, and which relies on multiple heterogeneous quotations, most of which are borrowed from very doubtful "sources"; but that is not what interests us at present, any more than what is simply in conformity with certain "conventional" theses that are found almost invariably in all works of this kind. We prefer to limit ourselves, for this is what is most "instructive," to showing the errors implied in the guiding idea itself, errors that the author manifestly owes to his former affiliations, so that, in sum, he does nothing but contribute to spreading and accrediting the views of those whom he believes he has become the adversary of, and he continues to take for initiation what they presented to him as such, but which is really only one of the paths that can serve to prepare agents or instruments for "counter-initiation."

Naturally, everything in question is confined within a certain purely psychic domain and, by that very fact, can have no relation with true initiation, which is, on the contrary, of an essentially spiritual order; there is much talk of "magic" in it, and, as we have already said often, magical operations of whatever kind do not in any way constitute an initiatic process. On the other hand, we find this singular belief that every initiation must rest on the awakening and ascent of Kundalinī, whereas this is in fact only a method proper to certain very particular initiatic forms; moreover, it is not the first time that we have observed, in what we would readily call anti-initiatic legends, a sort of obsession with Kundalinī, the reasons for which do not appear very clearly. Here, the matter is fairly closely linked to a certain interpretation of the symbolism of the serpent, taken in an exclusively "malefic" sense; the author seems not to have the slightest idea of the double signification of certain symbols; but this is a point to which we propose to return shortly. Be that as it may, Kundalinī-Yoga is assuredly something quite other than magic; but what is abusively envisaged under this name, in the case that concerns us, may well be nothing but that; if it were only a question of "pseudo-initiation," it would doubtless be even less than that, a purely "psychological" illusion; but if "counter-initiation" intervenes to some degree, there can very well be a real deviation, resulting in a taking of contact, not with a transcendent principle or with the higher states of being, but quite simply with the "astral light," or rather we would say with the world of "wandering influences." The author, who accepts the expression "astral light," designates this result under the name of "illumination," which thus becomes curiously equivocal: instead of applying to the acquisition of a higher knowledge, as it should normally if taken in a legitimate initiatic sense, it refers only to phenomena of "clairvoyance" or to other "powers" of the same category, "powers" moreover especially negative, since it appears that they ultimately serve to render the one afflicted by them accessible to suggestions emanating from unknown "Masters," who, in the present case, are nothing but sinister "black magicians."

We readily admit the accuracy of such a description for certain auxiliary

organizations of "counter-initiation," which indeed seeks in general only to make of its members simple unconscious instruments that it may use at will; we ask ourselves only, since this point is not perfectly clear, what precise role the so-called "initiate" plays in the magical operations that must bring about such a result, and it seems quite clear that this can be, at bottom, only the wholly passive role of a "subject." But what we contest in the most absolute manner is that this same result has anything whatsoever in common with initiation, which on the contrary excludes all passivity; we have already explained, on other occasions, that this is one of the reasons why it is incompatible with mysticism; all the more so is it incompatible with what implies a passivity of an incomparably lower order than that of mystics, and which in sum falls within what has been customary, since the invention of spiritism, to designate under the vulgar name of "mediumship." Perhaps even, let us say in passing, what is in question here is fairly comparable to what was the real origin of this "mediumship" and of spiritism itself; and, on the other hand, when "clairvoyance" is obtained through certain psychic "trainings," even if Kundalinī has nothing to do with it, it commonly has the effect of rendering the being eminently "suggestible," as is proved by the constant conformity of his visions with the special theories of the school to which he belongs; it is therefore not difficult to understand all the advantage that true "black magicians," that is to say representatives of "counter-initiation," can draw from this. It is no more difficult to realize that all this goes directly against the very aim of initiation, which is properly to "deliver" the being from all contingencies, and not at all to impose upon him new bonds that add themselves to those that naturally condition the existence of the ordinary man; the initiate is not a "subject," he is even exactly the contrary; every tendency toward passivity can only be an obstacle to initiation, and where it is decidedly predominant, it constitutes an irremediable "disqualification."

We know well that one may object to this that certain initiatic paths involve a more or less complete submission to a guru; but this objection is in no way valid, first because it is a question of a submission freely consented to, not of a subjection imposed without the disciple's knowledge, secondly because the guru is always perfectly known to the

latter, who is in a real and direct relationship with him, and that he is not an unknown personage manifesting himself “in the astral,” that is to say, all phantasmagoria aside, acting through a sort of “telepathic” influence. Moreover, this submission has only the character of a simple “pedagogical” means, one might say, of a wholly transitory necessity; not only will a true spiritual instructor never abuse it, but he will use it only to render the disciple capable of freeing himself from it as soon as possible, for, if there is an invariable affirmation in such cases, it is that the true guru is purely interior, that he is none other than the “Self” of the being himself. Initiation must lead to the consciousness of this “Self,” which is obviously not the fact of children under tutelage nor of psychic automatons; the initiatic “chain” is not made to bind the being, but on the contrary to provide him with a support allowing him to rise indefinitely and to surpass his own limitations. Even when it is a question of contingent applications that may secondarily coexist with the essential aim, an initiatic organization has no use for passive and blind instruments, whose normal place could in any case only be in the profane world, since every “qualification” is lacking to them; what it must find among its members, at all degrees and in all functions, is a conscious and voluntary collaboration, implying all the effective understanding of which each is capable; and no true hierarchy can be realized or maintained on any other basis than that.

A HIEROGLYPH OF THE POLE

At the end of our remarks on the Tetraktys, we made an allusion to the cubic "stone with a point," reserving for ourselves a return to certain considerations relating to it. This figure, in ancient documents, is completed, in a rather unexpected manner, by the addition of an axe that seems to be placed in equilibrium on the very summit of the pyramid. This particularity has often intrigued specialists in Masonic symbolism, most of whom have been unable to give any satisfactory explanation of it; however, it has been suggested that the axe might well be here nothing other than the hieroglyph of the Hebrew letter qoph, and it is indeed there that the true solution lies; but the correspondences that must be made in this regard are still much more significant if one considers the corresponding Arabic letter qāf, and it has seemed interesting to us to give an outline of them, despite the character of strangeness that these things risk taking on in the eyes of the Western reader, who is necessarily not accustomed to this kind of consideration.

The most general meaning attached to the letter in question, whether in Hebrew or in Arabic, is that of "force" or "power" (in Arabic qowah), which may moreover, according to the cases, be of a material order or of a spiritual order (1); and it is indeed to this meaning that the symbolism of a weapon such as the axe corresponds in the most immediate manner. In the case that presently concerns us, it is obviously a spiritual power that must be in question; this results from the fact that the axe is put into direct relation, not with the cube, but with the pyramid; and one may recall here what we have already explained on other occasions concerning the equivalence of the axe with the vajra, which is also, before all else, the sign of spiritual power. There is more: the axe is placed, not at just any point, but, as we have said, at the summit of the pyramid, a summit that is often considered as representing that of a spiritual or initiatic hierarchy; this position therefore seems to indicate the highest spiritual power in action in the world, that is to say what all traditions designate as the "Pole"; here again, we shall recall the "axial" character of symbolic weapons in general and of the axe in particular,

which is manifestly in perfect accord with such an interpretation.

Now what is very remarkable is that the very name of the letter qāf is also, in the Arabic tradition, that of the sacred or polar Mountain[1]; the pyramid, which is essentially an image of it, thus bears, by this letter or by the axe that replaces it, its own designation as such, as if to leave no doubt as to the meaning that it is appropriate to recognize for it traditionally. Moreover, if the symbol of the mountain or of the pyramid is related to the Axis of the World, its summit, where this letter is placed, identifies more particularly with the Pole itself; now qāf is numerically equivalent to maqām[2], which designates this point as the "Place" par excellence, that is to say the unique point that remains fixed and invariable in all the revolutions of the world.

The letter qāf is, in addition, the first of the Arabic name of the Pole, Qutb, and, by this title as well, it can serve to designate it in abbreviated form, according to a procedure whose use is very frequent[3]; but there are still other concordances no less striking. Thus the seat (the Arabic word is markaz, which properly signifies "center") of the supreme Pole (called al-Qutb al-Ghawth, to distinguish it from the seven Aqtāb or secondary and subordinate Poles)[4] is described symbolically as situated between heaven and earth, at a point that is exactly above the Ka'bah, which precisely has the form of a cube and is also one of the representations of the Center of the World. One may therefore envisage the pyramid, invisible because it is of a purely spiritual nature, as rising above this cube, which is visible because it relates to the elementary

1 Some wish to identify the mountain Qaf with the Caucasus (qafqasiyah). If this assimilation had to be taken literally in the current geographical sense, it would certainly be erroneous, for it would not accord in any way with what is said of the sacred Mountain, which can be reached 'neither by land nor by sea' (la bil-barr wa la bil-bahr). But it must be noted that this name Caucasus was applied long ago to several mountains situated in very different regions, which suggests that originally it may really have been one of the designations of the sacred Mountain, of which the other Caucases would then be so many secondary 'localisations'.

2 Qaf = 100 + 1 + 80 = 181; maqam = 40 + 100 + 1 +40 = 181. In Hebrew the same numerical equivalence is found between qoph and maqom. These words, furthermore, do not differ from the corresponding Arabic words except by the substitution of vau for alif, of which there are numerous other examples (nar and nür, 'alam and olam, etc.); the total is then 186.

3 It is thus that the letter mim, for example, may serve to designate the Mahdi. Muhyi d-Din. ibn al-Arabi sometimes gives it this meaning.

4 The seven Aqtab correspond to the 'seven lands' which are also mentioned in other traditions; and these seven terrestrial Poles are a reflection of the seven celestial Poles which preside respectively over the seven planetary Heavens.

world marked by the quaternary number; and, at the same time, this cube, upon which thus rests the base of the pyramid, or of the hierarchy of which it is the figure and of which the Qutb occupies the summit, is also, by its form, a symbol of perfect stability.

The supreme Qutb is assisted by the two Imāms of the right and of the left, and the ternary thus formed is again represented, in the pyramid, by the triangular form that is that of each of its faces. On the other hand, the unity and the binary that constitute this ternary correspond to the letters alif and bā', according to their respective numerical values. The letter alif presents the form of a vertical axis; its upper point and the two extremities in horizontal opposition of the letter bā' form, according to a schema whose equivalents could be found in various symbols belonging to other traditions, the three angles of the initiatic triangle, which indeed must be considered properly as one of the "signatures" of the Pole.

Let us add further, on this last point, that the letter alif is very especially considered as "polar" (qutbāniyyah); its name and the word Qutb are numerically equivalent: alif = 1 + 30 + 80 = 111; Qutb = 100 + 9 + 2 = 111. This number thus represents unity expressed in the three worlds, which is perfectly suited to characterize the very function of the Pole.

These remarks could doubtless have been developed further, but we think we have said enough for even those who are most foreign to the traditional science of letters and numbers to have to recognize at least that it would be very difficult to pretend to see in all this only a simple set of "coincidences"!

June 1937

INITIATION AND "SERVICE"

Among the characteristics of modern "pseudo-initiatic" organizations, there is perhaps none more general nor more striking than the fact of attributing an esoteric and initiatic value to considerations that can have a more or less acceptable meaning only within the most purely exoteric domain; such a confusion is moreover in a certain sense inevitable on the part of profanes who, wishing to pass themselves off as what they are not, lay claim to speaking of things they are ignorant of and of which they naturally form an idea proportioned to what they are capable of understanding. No less naturally, the considerations of this kind on which they insist most are always in conformity with the predominant tendencies of the present epoch, and they even follow these in their more or less secondary variations; one might ask, in this regard, how the fact of thus undergoing the influence of the profane world can be reconciled with even the slightest initiatic pretensions; but, naturally, those concerned do not in the least perceive what is contradictory in this. One could easily cite such organizations which, at their beginnings, gave the illusion of a certain intellectuality, at least to those who did not go to the bottom of things, and which subsequently came to confine themselves more and more within the worst sentimental banalities; and it is evident that this display of sentimentalism merely corresponds to what can also be observed at present in the "external world." One encounters, moreover, on both sides, exactly the same formulas, at once empty and grandiloquent, whose effect belongs to those "suggestions" to which we have often alluded, although those who employ them are certainly not always themselves conscious of the ends toward which all this tends; and the ridicule they present in the eyes of anyone who knows how to reflect even a little is further increased when they serve for parodies of esoterism. This ridicule is moreover a veritable "mark" of the influences that are really acting behind all this, even if those who

obey them are far from suspecting it; we have already explained ourselves on this subject, and we wish here only to return to a case that seems to us particularly significant, and which is connected in a certain way with what we indicated in our previous article.

In the special phraseology of the organizations in question, there are words that recur uniformly and with an ever-increasing insistence: these words are “service” and “servants”; more and more, they are found everywhere and on every occasion; there is here something like an obsession, and one may legitimately ask to what kind of “suggestion” they correspond. Doubtless, one must allow here for the Western mania for “humility,” or rather, to speak more exactly, for its outward display, since the reality may be very different, just as when, in the same milieus, the most violent and hateful quarrels are accompanied by great discourses on “universal brotherhood.” It is moreover well understood that, in this case, it is a wholly “lay” and “democratic” humility that is involved, in perfect accord with an “ideal” that consists, not in raising the inferior to the extent of its capacity, but on the contrary in lowering the superior to its level; it is clear indeed that one must be imbued with this modern “ideal,” essentially anti-hierarchical, in order not to perceive what is unpleasant in such expressions, even if it happens that the intentions they cover are nothing but laudable in themselves. No doubt one would have to distinguish, under this latter aspect, between the very diverse applications that may be made of them; but what matters to us here is only the state of mind betrayed by the words employed.

However, these remarks, entirely general and equally valid in all cases, are not sufficient when it is more specifically a matter of “pseudo-initiation”; there is then, in addition, a confusion of the kind we pointed out at the beginning, a confusion due to the preponderance attributed by moderns to action on the one hand and to the social point of view on the other, which leads them to imagine that these things must intervene even in a domain where they in fact have no place. By one of those strange inversions of all normal order to which our epoch is accustomed, the most exterior activities come to be regarded as essential conditions of

initiation, sometimes even as its very goal, for, incredible as this may be, there are those who go so far as to see in it nothing other than a means of better "serving"; and, let it be well noted, there is yet an aggravating circumstance in that these activities are in fact conceived in the most profane manner, being devoid of the traditional character, albeit naturally entirely exoteric, that they could at least assume if they were envisaged from a religious point of view; but there is indeed a long way from religion to the simple "humanitarian" moralism that is the practice of "pseudo-initiates" of every category!

On the other hand, it is incontestable that sentimentalism, under all its forms, always disposes toward a certain "passivity"; here we rejoin the question that we have already treated previously, and it is also here that one finds, very probably, the principal reason for the "suggestion" that we now have in view, and in any case what renders it particularly dangerous. Indeed, by dint of repeating to someone that he must "serve" anything whatsoever, even vague "ideal" entities, one ends by putting him into such dispositions that he will be ready to "serve" effectively, when the occasion presents itself, all that claims to incarnate these entities or to represent them in a more positive manner; and the orders he may then receive, whatever their character may be, even if they go so far as the worst extravagances, will find in him the obedience of a veritable "servant." One will easily understand that this means is one of the best that can be employed to prepare instruments that "counter-initiation" will be able to use at will; and it further has the advantage of being one of the least compromising, since "suggestion," in cases of this kind, can very well be exercised by vulgar dupes, that is to say by other unconscious instruments, without those who direct them unknowingly ever needing to intervene directly.

Let it not be objected that, where it is thus a question of "service," there could in sum be a path of bhakti; despite the sentimental element that this implies to a certain extent, it is something entirely different; and even if one wishes to render bhakti as "devotion," as is most commonly done, although this is only a derived meaning and the primary and essential sense of the word is in reality that of "participation," as M.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has shown, “devotion” is not “service,” or at least it would be exclusively “divine service,” and not, as we said a moment ago, “service” of anyone or of anything whatsoever. As for the “service” of a guru, if one insists on using this word where such a thing exists, it is, we repeat, only by way of preparatory discipline, concerning solely what one might call the “aspirants,” and not those who have already attained effective initiation; and here again we are very far from the character of high spiritual finality so curiously attributed to “service” by “pseudo-initiates.” Finally, since all objections must be anticipated, as for the links existing between the members of an initiatic organization, one cannot obviously give the name of “service” to the help given by the superior as such to the inferior, nor more generally to relations in which the double hierarchy of degrees and functions must always be rigorously observed.

We shall not insist further on this subject, which is on the whole rather disagreeable; but at least we have thought it necessary, seeing to how many diverse and suspect “services” people are today invited on all sides, to point out the danger hidden beneath this and to state clearly what the matter is, even at the risk of drawing upon ourselves once again invectives to which we are far too accustomed to fear them. To conclude in two words, we shall simply say this: the initiate has no need to be a “servant,” or, at least, he must be so only of the Truth.

ON “ANIMISM” AND “SHAMANISM”

The idea that there exist things that are purely “material” is a wholly modern conception, and one whose meaning it would moreover be rather difficult to specify clearly, for the very notion of “matter,” as it is currently understood, is far from being clear; and, as we have pointed out on various occasions, one finds nothing in traditional doctrines that truly corresponds to it. But, fundamentally, one can understand what is meant without encumbering oneself with all the complications added by the special theories of physicists: it is simply the idea that there are beings and things that are only corporeal, and whose existence and constitution imply no element of an order other than that. It is then easy to realize that this idea is directly linked to the profane point of view, as it is affirmed in modern sciences: these are essentially characterized by the absence of any attachment to principles of a higher order; likewise, the things they take as the object of their study are themselves conceived as devoid of such attachment, and this is, one might say, a condition for science to be adequate to its object, since, if it admitted that it were otherwise, it would thereby have to acknowledge that the true nature of this object escapes it. Perhaps one should not seek elsewhere the reason why “scientists” have so fiercely endeavored to discredit every conception other than this, by presenting it as a “superstition” due to the imagination of “primitives,” who, for them, can be nothing other than savages or men of infantile mentality, as “evolutionist” theories would have it; and whether this be incomprehension or bias on their part, they in fact succeed in giving of it a sufficiently caricatural idea for such an appraisal to appear entirely justified to all those who take them at their word, that is to say to the great majority of our contemporaries.

We wish here to allude in particular to the theories of ethnologists concerning what they have agreed to call “animism”; such a term could indeed, at a pinch, have an acceptable meaning, but obviously only on condition of understanding it quite otherwise than they do, and of seeing in it only what it can signify etymologically, and it is this point that we shall try to explain as clearly as possible. The corporeal world, in reality,

must not be considered as a self-sufficient whole, nor as something isolated within the ensemble of universal manifestation; on the contrary, as we have explained at length elsewhere, it proceeds entirely from the subtle order, in which it has, one may say, its immediate principle, and through the intermediary of which it is linked, step by step, to informal manifestation, then to the unmanifested; if it were otherwise, its existence could only be a pure and simple illusion, a sort of phantasmagoria behind which there would be nothing. Under these conditions, there can be, in this corporeal world, no thing whose existence does not ultimately rest on elements of the subtle order, and, beyond these, on a principle that may be said to be "spiritual," and without which no manifestation is possible at any degree whatsoever.

If we confine ourselves to the consideration of subtle elements, which must thus be present in all things of this world, we may say that they correspond there to what constitutes the "psychic" order in the human being; one may therefore, by a wholly natural extension that implies no "anthropomorphism," but only a perfectly legitimate analogy, also call them "psychic" in all cases, or again "animic," for these two words, if one refers to their primary meaning according to their respective Greek and Latin derivations, are in fact exactly synonymous. It follows from this that, whatever the appearances may be, there can really be no "inanimate" objects; this is moreover why "life" is one of the conditions to which all corporeal existence is subject without exception; and this is also why no one has ever been able to arrive at a satisfactory definition of the distinction between the "living" and the "non-living," this question, like so many others in modern philosophy and science, being insoluble only because it has no reason truly to arise, since the "non-living" has no place in the domain envisaged, and since in sum everything is reduced in this regard to simple differences of degree.

One may therefore, if one wishes, call "animism" such a way of envisaging things, understanding by this word nothing more nor other than the affirmation that there are in them "animic" elements; and it is moreover evident that this conception is "primitive," but quite simply because it is true, which is almost exactly the opposite of what

“evolutionists” mean when they qualify it thus. At the same time, and for the same reason, this conception is necessarily common to all traditional doctrines; one might therefore also say that it is “normal,” whereas the opposite idea, that of “inanimate” things, represents a veritable anomaly, as is the case moreover for all ideas that are specifically modern. But it must be well understood that there is in all this absolutely no question of a “personification” of natural forces, nor of their “adoration,” as is claimed by those for whom “animism” constitutes what they believe they can call “primitive religion”; in reality, these are considerations that belong solely to the domain of cosmology, and that can find their application in various traditional sciences. It goes without saying also that, when it is a question of “psychic” elements inherent in things, or of forces of the same order expressing and manifesting themselves through them, all this has absolutely nothing “spiritual” about it; the confusion of these two domains is again purely modern, and it is doubtless not unrelated to the idea of making a “religion” of what is science in the most exact sense of the word; despite their claim to “clear ideas,” our contemporaries mix in a very singular manner the most heterogeneous and the most essentially distinct things!

Now, it is important to note that ethnologists are in the habit of regarding as “primitive” forms that are, on the contrary, degenerate to one degree or another; nevertheless, very often they are not really at a level as low as their interpretations would suggest; but, be that as it may, this explains how “animism,” which in sum constitutes only a particular point of a doctrine, could have been taken to characterize that doctrine as a whole. Indeed, in cases of degeneration, it is naturally the superior part of the doctrine, that is to say its metaphysical and “spiritual” side, that always disappears more or less completely; consequently, what was originally only secondary, and notably the cosmological and “psychic” side, to which “animism” and its applications belong, takes on a preponderant importance; the rest, even if it still subsists to a certain extent, may easily escape the outside observer, all the more so as the latter, ignorant of the profound significance of rites and symbols, is incapable of recognizing in them what pertains to a higher order, and

believes he can explain everything indiscriminately in terms of “magic,” or even sometimes of pure and simple “sorcery.”

One may find a very clear example of what we have just indicated in a case such as that of “shamanism,” which is generally regarded as one of the typical forms of “animism”: this designation, whose derivation is moreover rather uncertain, properly designates the ensemble of traditional doctrines and practices of certain Mongol peoples of Siberia; but some extend it to what elsewhere presents more or less similar characteristics. For many, “shamanism” is almost synonymous with sorcery, which is certainly incorrect, for there is there quite another thing; this word has thus undergone an inverse deviation from that of “fetishism,” which, for its part, does etymologically have the meaning of sorcery, but which has been applied to things in which there is not only that either. Let us note, in this regard, that the distinction that some have wished to establish between “shamanism” and “fetishism,” considered as two varieties of “animism,” is perhaps not as clear nor as important as they think: whether it be human beings, as in the first case, or objects of any kind, as in the second, that serve principally as “supports” or “condensers,” so to speak, for certain influences, this is a simple difference of “technical” modalities, which in sum has nothing absolutely essential about it.[1]

If one considers “shamanism” properly so called, one finds there the existence of a very developed cosmology, which could give rise to comparisons with those of other traditions on numerous points, beginning with the division of the “three worlds,” which seems to constitute its very basis. On the other hand, one also encounters rites comparable to some of those that belong to traditions of the highest order: some, for example, strikingly recall Vedic rites, and are even among those that most manifestly proceed from the primordial tradition, such as those in which the symbols of the tree and the swan play the principal role. There is therefore no doubt that there is here something which, at its origins at least, constituted a regular and normal traditional form; moreover, there has been preserved in it, down to the present epoch, a certain “transmission” of the powers necessary for the exercise

of the functions of the “shaman”; but when one sees that the latter devotes his activity especially to the lowest traditional sciences, such as magic and divination, one may suspect from this that there has been a very real degeneration, and even wonder whether at times it might not go so far as a veritable deviation, to which things of this order, when they take on such excessive development, can all too easily give rise.

There are, in this regard, rather disquieting indications; one of these is the link established between the “shaman” and an animal, a link concerning exclusively an individual and which consequently is in no way assimilable to the collective link that constitutes what is called, rightly or wrongly, “totemism.” We must moreover say that what is involved here could, in itself, be susceptible of an entirely legitimate interpretation having nothing to do with sorcery; but what gives it a more suspect character is that, among certain peoples, if not among all, the animal is then regarded in some manner as a form of the “shaman” himself; and from such an identification to “lycanthropy,” as it exists especially among peoples of the black race, there is perhaps not an extremely great distance.

But there is yet something else: the “shamans,” among the psychic influences with which they have to deal, quite naturally distinguish two kinds, some beneficent and others maleficent; and, as there is evidently nothing to fear from the former, it is with the latter that they concern themselves almost exclusively; such appears to be at least the most frequent case, for it is possible that “shamanism” comprises quite varied forms among which distinctions would have to be made in this regard. There is, moreover, absolutely no question of a “cult” rendered to these maleficent influences, which would be a sort of conscious “satanism,” as has sometimes been wrongly supposed; it is only a matter of preventing them from harming, of neutralizing or diverting their action. The same remark could also apply to other supposed “devil worshippers” who exist in various regions; in a general way, it is scarcely likely that real “satanism” could be the fact of an entire people.

Nevertheless, it is no less true that the contact, so to speak constant,

with these inferior psychic forces is among the most dangerous, first for the “shaman” himself, that goes without saying, and also from another point of view whose interest is much less narrowly “localized.” Indeed, it may happen that some, operating in a more conscious manner and with more extensive knowledge, which does not mean of a higher order, make use of these same forces for entirely different ends, without the knowledge of the “shamans” or of those who act like them, and who then play only the role of simple instruments for the accumulation of the forces in question at determined points. We know that there thus exist, throughout the world, a certain number of “reservoirs” of tenebrous influences whose distribution is assuredly not fortuitous, and which serve all too well the designs of “counter-initiation.”

July 1937

ON THE DOUBLE MEANING OF SYMBOLS

One is sometimes astonished that one and the same symbol can be taken in two senses which, apparently at least, are directly opposed to one another; it is not a question here, of course, of the multiplicity of meanings that, in a general way, every symbol may present according to the point of view or the level at which one envisages it, but, more specifically, of two aspects that are linked to one another by a certain relation of correlation, taking the form of an opposition, such that one of them is, so to speak, the inverse or the "negative" of the other. In order to understand this, one must start from the consideration of duality as presupposed by every manifestation and, consequently, as conditioning it in all its modes, where it must always be found again under one form or another; it is true that this duality is properly a complementarism and not an opposition; but two terms that are in reality complementary can also, from a more exterior and more contingent point of view, appear as opposed. Every opposition exists as such only at a certain level, for there cannot be any that is irreducible; at a higher level, it is resolved into a complementarism in which its two terms are already reconciled and harmonized, before finally re-entering into the unity of the common principle from which they both proceed.

One could therefore say that the point of view of complementarism is, in a certain sense, intermediate between that of opposition and that of unification; and each of these points of view has its reason for being and its proper value in the order to which it applies, although, obviously, they are not situated at the same degree of reality; what matters, therefore, is to know how to place each aspect in its hierarchical place, and not to claim to transfer it into a domain where it would no longer have any acceptable meaning.

In these conditions, one can understand that the fact of envisaging in a symbol two contrary aspects has, in itself, nothing but what is perfectly legitimate, and that moreover the consideration of one of these aspects in no way excludes that of the other, since each of them is equally true under a certain relation, and even their existence is in some way interdependent. It is therefore an error, fairly frequent besides, to think that the respective consideration of the one and of the other of these aspects must be referred to doctrines or to schools that are themselves in opposition; here, everything depends only on the predominance that may be attributed to the one in relation to the other, or sometimes also on the intention according to which the symbol may be employed, for example as an element intervening in certain rites, or again as a means of recognition; but that is a point to which we shall have to return. What clearly shows that the two aspects do not exclude one another and are capable of being envisaged simultaneously is that they may be found united in one and the same complex symbolic figuration; in this regard, it is appropriate to note, although we cannot for the moment develop this completely, that a duality, which may be opposition or complementarism according to the point of view at which one places oneself, can, as to the situation of its terms one in relation to the other, be disposed in a vertical sense or in a horizontal sense; this results immediately from the crucial schema of the quaternary, which can be decomposed into two dualities, one vertical and the other horizontal. The vertical duality may be referred to the two extremities of an axis, or to the two contrary directions according to which this axis may be traversed; the horizontal duality is that of two elements that are situated symmetrically on either side of this same axis; one may give as an example of the first case the two triangles of the seal of Solomon, and as an example of the second the two serpents of the caduceus; and one will remark that it is only in the vertical duality that the two terms are clearly distinguished the one from the other by their inverse position, whereas, in the horizontal duality, they may appear quite similar or equivalent when one envisages them separately, although nevertheless their signification is no less really contrary in this case than in the other. One may say further that, in the spatial order, the vertical duality is that of

the high and the low, and the horizontal duality that of the right and the left; this observation will perhaps seem too evident, but it is no less important for that, because, symbolically, these two couples of terms are themselves capable of multiple applications, on which there is moreover no need to insist at present, but of which it would not be very difficult to discover traces even in ordinary language, which clearly indicates that these are matters of a very general scope.

All this being posited in principle, one may without difficulty deduce from it certain consequences concerning what one might call the practical use of symbols; but, in this regard, one must first bring in a consideration of a more particular character, that of the case where the two contrary aspects are taken respectively as “beneficent” and as “maleficent.” We employ these two expressions for want of better, for they have the disadvantage of being able to suggest that there is here some more or less “moral” interpretation, whereas in reality there is nothing of the kind, and that they must be understood here in a purely “technical” sense. Moreover, it must also be well understood that the “beneficent” or “maleficent” quality does not attach in an absolute manner to one of the two aspects, since it properly suits only a special application, to which it would be impossible to reduce indiscriminately every opposition whatever it may be, and in any case it necessarily disappears when one passes from the point of view of opposition to that of complementarism, to which such a consideration is totally foreign. Within these limits and taking account of these reservations, this is a point of view that normally has its place among the others; but it is also from this very point of view that there can result, in the interpretation and use of symbolism, a sort of “subversion” which often constitutes one of the characteristic “marks” of that which, consciously or not, belongs to the domain of “counter-initiation” or finds itself more or less directly subjected to its influence.

The “subversion” of which we speak may consist either in attributing to the “maleficent” aspect, while nevertheless recognizing it as such, the place that must normally return to the “beneficent” aspect, even a sort of supremacy over the latter, or in interpreting symbols in reverse of their

legitimate sense, considering as “beneficent” the aspect that is in reality “maleficent” and inversely. It must moreover be noted that, according to what we said previously, such a “subversion” may not appear visibly in the representation of symbols, since there are some for which the two opposed aspects are not marked by an exterior difference recognizable at first sight: thus, in figurations that relate to what one is accustomed to call, rather improperly besides, the “cult of the serpent,” it would often be impossible, at least if one considers only the serpent itself, to say a priori whether it is a question of the Agathodaimōn or of the Kakodaimōn; hence many mistakes, above all on the part of those who, ignorant of this double signification of the serpent, are tempted to see in it everywhere and always only a “maleficent” symbol, which is the case for the generality of modern Westerners; and what we say here of the serpent could likewise apply to many other symbolic animals, for which one has commonly taken the habit, whatever the reasons may be, of no longer envisaging more than one of the two opposed aspects that they in reality possess.

For symbols that are capable of taking two inverse positions, and especially for those that reduce to geometric forms, it may seem that the difference must appear much more clearly; and yet, in fact, it is not always so, since the two positions of the same symbol are capable of having both one and the other a legitimate signification, and moreover their relation is not necessarily that of the “beneficent” and the “maleficent,” which is, let us repeat again, only a simple particular application among all the others. What it is important to know in such cases is whether there is really a will to “reversal,” one might say, in formal contradiction with the legitimate and normal value of the symbol; this is why, as we remarked with regard to a book of which we rendered account recently, the use of the inverted triangle, for example, is far from always being a sign of “black magic,” although it is effectively so in certain cases, those in which there attaches to it an intention to take the opposite of what the triangle whose point is turned upwards represents; and, let us note incidentally, such an intentional “reversal” is also exercised upon words or formulas, as can be observed in certain practices of sorcery.

One sees therefore that the question is more complex than some imagine, and we would readily say more subtle, for what must be examined in order to know what one truly has to do with in such and such a case is less the figurations taken in their “materiality” than the interpretations that accompany them and by which is explained the intention that presided over their adoption. Still more, the most skillful and most dangerous “subversion” is certainly that which does not betray itself by singularities that are too manifest and that anyone can easily perceive, but which distorts the meaning of symbols or overturns their value without changing anything in their exterior appearances. But the most diabolical ruse of all is perhaps that which consists in having attributed to orthodox symbolism itself, as it exists in truly traditional organizations, and more particularly in initiatic organizations, which are especially targeted in such cases, the reverse interpretation that is properly the work of “counter-initiation”; and the latter, as we have recently pointed out, does not refrain from using this means in order to provoke the confusions and equivocations from which it has some profit to draw. That is, fundamentally, the whole secret of certain campaigns conducted either against esoterism in general or against this or that initiatic form in particular, with the unconscious assistance of people most of whom would be very astonished, and even terrified, if they could realize what they are being used for; it unfortunately happens sometimes that those who believe they are fighting the devil thus find themselves quite simply, without suspecting it in the least, transformed into his best servants

PSYCHIC RESIDUES

We have alluded, in connection with shamanism, to a possible use of certain forces, in cases such as that one, by the powers of "counter-initiation"; perhaps it is good to add on this point some complementary precisions, for one might be astonished that the vestiges of what was originally an authentic tradition lend themselves to a "subversion" of this kind. In truth, this case is entirely comparable to that of the psychic remains that a human being leaves behind him in passing to another state, and which, as soon as they have thus been abandoned by the "spirit," may also serve for anything; whether they are besides used consciously by a magician or a sorcerer, or unconsciously by spiritists, the more or less maleficent effects that may result from them obviously have nothing to do with the proper quality of the being to which these elements formerly belonged; it is no longer than a special category of "wandering influences," which have retained at most from this being only a purely illusory appearance.

What one must realize in order to understand such a similarity well is that spiritual influences, in order to enter into action in our world, must necessarily take appropriate "supports," first in the psychic order, then in the corporeal order itself, so that there is there something analogous to the constitution of a human being. If these spiritual influences subsequently withdraw, for whatever reason, their former corporeal "supports," places or objects, will nonetheless remain charged with psychic elements, and these will even be all the stronger and more persistent insofar as they have served as intermediaries and instruments for a more powerful action. One could logically conclude from this that the case where it is a question of important traditional and initiatic centers, extinguished for a more or less long time, is in sum the one that presents the greatest dangers in this regard, whether simple imprudences provoke violent reactions of the psychic "conglomerates" that subsist there, or above all "black magicians," to employ the expression commonly admitted, seize upon these to maneuver them at will and

obtain from them effects conformable to their designs.

Let us remark that the first of the two cases we have just indicated suffices to explain, at least in part, the noxious character presented by certain vestiges of disappeared civilizations, when they come to be exhumed by people who, ignorant of all these things, act necessarily as imprudent persons by that very fact. That is not to say that there cannot sometimes be still something else: thus, such and such an ancient civilization may, in its last period, have degenerated through an excessive development of magic, as we have already pointed out on other occasions, and its remains will then naturally keep the imprint of it, in the form of psychic influences of the lowest order. It may also be that, even outside any degeneration of this sort, places or objects were specially prepared with a view to a defensive action against those who would touch them improperly, for such precautions have in themselves nothing illegitimate, although nevertheless the fact of attaching too great an importance to them is not among the most favorable indications, since it testifies to preoccupations rather distant from pure spirituality, and even perhaps to a certain unawareness of the proper power that the latter possesses in itself and without any need to have recourse to such "adjuvants." But, all that aside, the subsisting psychic influences, deprived of the "spirit" that formerly directed them and thus reduced to a sort of "larval" state, may very well react of themselves to some provocation, however involuntary it may be, in a more or less disordered fashion and which, in any case, has no relation with the intentions of those who formerly employed them for an action of an entirely different order, any more than the incoherent manifestations of psychic "corpses" that sometimes intervene in spiritist séances have any relation with what the individualities of which they constituted the subtle form could have done or wished to do, in any circumstance whatever, and whose posthumous "identity" they still simulate as best they can, to the great amazement of naïve persons who are willing to take them for "spirits."

The influences in question may therefore, on many occasions, already be sufficiently maleficent when they are simply left to themselves; this

is a fact that results from nothing other than the very nature of these forces of the "intermediate world," and for which no one can do anything, any more than one can prevent the action of "physical" forces, by which we mean of the corporeal order, from also causing, under certain conditions, accidents for which no human will or other could be held responsible. But, moreover, these same influences are at the mercy of whoever will know how to "capture" them, just as "physical" forces are likewise; it goes without saying that both the one and the other will then be able to serve the most diverse and even the most opposed ends, according to the intentions of the one who has seized them and who will direct them as he understands; and, if it turns out that this one is a "black magician," it is quite evident that he will make of them a use entirely contrary to that which the qualified representatives of a regular tradition may have made of them originally.

Everything we have said up to here applies to the vestiges left by a tradition entirely extinguished; but, alongside this case, there is place to envisage another: that of an ancient traditional civilization that survives, so to speak, itself, in the sense that its degeneration has been pushed to such a point that the "spirit" will have ended by withdrawing from it totally; certain knowledges, which have in themselves nothing "spiritual" and belong only to the order of contingent applications, will still be able to continue to be transmitted, above all the lowest among them, but naturally they will then be susceptible of all deviations, for they too no longer represent anything but "residues" of another sort, the pure doctrine on which they ought normally to depend having disappeared. In such a case of "survival," the psychic influences formerly put to work by the representatives of the tradition may still be "captured," even without the knowledge of their apparent continuators, but henceforth illegitimate; those who will really make use of them through these will thus have the advantage of having at their disposal, as unconscious instruments of the action they wish to exercise, no longer only so-called "inanimate" objects, but also living men who likewise serve as "supports" for these influences, and whose current existence naturally confers upon these a greater "vitality." It is indeed exactly this that we had in view in considering an example such as that of

“shamanism,” with the reservation, of course, that this may not apply indiscriminately to everything one is accustomed to range under this somewhat conventional designation, and which in fact may perhaps not have reached an equal degree of decay.

A tradition that is thus deviated is truly dead as such, just as much as that for which no appearance of continuation exists any longer; moreover, if it were still living, however little it might be, such a “subversion,” which is in sum nothing other than a reversal of what subsists of it in order to make it serve in a sense anti-traditional by definition itself, could obviously not take place in any way. It is appropriate, however, to add that, even before things have come to this point and as soon as traditional organizations are sufficiently diminished and weakened to no longer be capable of a sufficient resistance, agents more or less direct of “counter-initiation” may already introduce themselves into them in order to work to hasten the moment when “subversion” will become possible; it is not certain that they succeed in all cases, for everything that still has some life can always recover itself; but if death occurs, the enemy will thus find himself in the place, one might say, quite ready to take advantage of it and to use the “corpse” immediately for his own ends. The representatives of what, in the Western world, still currently possesses an authentic traditional character, both in the exoteric domain and in the initiatic domain, would, we think, have the greatest interest in profiting from this last observation while there is still time, for, around them, the threatening signs constituted by “infiltrations” of this kind unfortunately are not lacking for whoever knows how to perceive them.

Another consideration that also has its importance is this: if “counter-initiation” has an advantage in seizing places that were the seat of ancient spiritual centers whenever it can, it is not only because of the psychic influences accumulated there and which are in some way “available”; it is also by reason of the particular situation of these places, for it goes without saying that they were not chosen arbitrarily for the role assigned to them at one time or another and in relation to this or that traditional form. “Sacred geography,” the knowledge of

which determines such a choice, is, like every other traditional science of a contingent order, susceptible of being diverted from its legitimate use and applied "in reverse": if a point is "privileged" for serving for the emission and direction of psychic influences when these are the vehicle of a spiritual action, it will be no less so when these same psychic influences are used in an entirely different manner and for ends contrary to all spirituality. This danger of diversion of certain knowledges, of which we find here a very clear example, explains moreover, let us note in passing, many reserves that are a quite natural thing in a normal civilization, but that moderns seem scarcely capable of understanding, since they commonly attribute to a will to "monopolize" these knowledges what is in reality only a measure intended to prevent their abuse as much as possible. In truth, moreover, this measure ceases to be effective only in the case where the organizations that are the depositories of the knowledges in question let penetrate into their midst unqualified individuals, even, as we have just said, agents of "counter-initiation," one of whose most immediate aims will then precisely be to discover these secrets. All this certainly has no relation with the true initiatic secret, which, as we have explained on other occasions, resides exclusively in the "ineffable" and the "incommunicable," and which, obviously, is thereby sheltered from any indiscreet search; but although only contingent matters are in question here, one must nevertheless recognize that the precautions that may be taken in this order to avoid any deviation are far from having only a negligible interest.

In any case, whether it be a question of the places themselves, of the influences that remain attached to them, or again of knowledges of the kind we have just mentioned, one may recall in this regard the ancient adage: "Corruptio optimi pessima"; and it is indeed of "corruption" that it is appropriate to speak, even in the most literal sense of this word, since the "residues" that are here in question are, as we said at the outset, comparable to the products of the decomposition of what was a living being. There is there, one might say, a sort of "necromancy" that puts into work psychic remains entirely other than those of human individualities, and it is assuredly not the least formidable, for it thereby has possibilities of action far more extended than those of vulgar

sorcery; moreover, our contemporaries must truly be very blind not to have even the slightest suspicion of it!

August-September 1937

THE FIFTH VEDA

Among the errors that are specifically modern, which we have often had occasion to denounce, one of those that most directly opposes any true understanding of traditional doctrines is what might be called "historicism," which is, moreover, at bottom nothing more than a simple consequence of the "evolutionist" mentality: it consists, in fact, in supposing that all things must have begun in the most rudimentary and gross manner, then undergone from there a progressive elaboration, such that this or that conception would have appeared at a determined moment, and all the later insofar as it is judged to be of a higher order, this implying that it can only be "the product of an already advanced civilization," according to an expression that has become so common that it is sometimes repeated almost mechanically by those very people who try to react against such a mentality, but who have only "traditionalist" intentions without any real traditional knowledge.

To this way of seeing things, it is appropriate to oppose clearly the affirmation that, on the contrary, it is at the origin that everything belonging to the spiritual and intellectual domain is found in a state of perfection, from which it has thereafter only gradually moved away in the course of the "obscuration" that necessarily accompanies every cyclical process of manifestation; this fundamental law, which we must be content to recall here without entering into more extensive developments, obviously suffices to reduce to nothing all the results of so-called "historical criticism."

One may further note that the latter implies a firmly established bias to deny any supra-human element, to treat traditional doctrines themselves in the manner of a purely human "thought," entirely comparable in this respect to what profane philosophy and sciences are; from this point of

view also, no compromise is possible, and moreover it is in reality this profane “thought” itself that is of very recent date, having been able to appear only as “the product of an already advanced degeneration,” we might say by turning back in an “anti-evolutionist” sense the phrase we cited earlier.

If we apply these general considerations to the Hindu tradition, we shall say that, contrary to the opinion of the orientalists, there exists nothing such as what is called “Vedism,” “Brahmanism,” and “Hinduism,” if one understands by that doctrines which would have arisen at successive periods and would have replaced one another, each of them being characterized by conceptions essentially different from those of the others, if not even more or less in contradiction with them, conceptions which would thus have formed successively as the result of a “reflection” imagined on the model of simple philosophical speculation.

These various designations, if one insists on retaining them, must be regarded only as designating one and the same tradition, to which they can all indeed apply; and at most one may say that each relates more directly to a certain aspect of this tradition, the different aspects moreover being closely linked and in no way able to be isolated from one another. This results immediately from the fact that the tradition in question is, in principle, contained integrally in the Veda, and that, consequently, everything that is contrary to the Veda or is not legitimately derived from it is thereby excluded from this tradition, under whatever aspect one may consider it; the essential unity and invariability of the doctrine are thus ensured, whatever may otherwise be the developments and adaptations to which it may give rise in order to respond more particularly to the needs and aptitudes of the men of this or that epoch.

It must indeed be clearly understood that the immutability of the doctrine in itself does not stand in the way of any development or any adaptation, on the sole condition that they always be in strict conformity with the principles, but also, at the same time, that nothing of all this ever constitutes “novelties,” since in any case it can only be a matter of

an “explicitation” of what the doctrine had always implied, or again of a formulation of the same truths in different terms in order to render them more easily accessible to the mentality of a more “obscured” epoch.

What could at first be grasped immediately and without difficulty in the principle itself, men of later epochs no longer knew how to see there, apart from exceptional cases, and it was then necessary to make up for this general lack of understanding by a detail of explanations and commentaries that until then had been in no way necessary; moreover, aptitudes for arriving directly at pure knowledge becoming ever rarer, it was necessary to open other “paths” employing means more and more contingent, following in a certain way, in order to remedy this as far as possible, the “descent” that was being accomplished from age to age in the course of the cycle of terrestrial humanity.

Thus, one might say, the latter received, in order to attain its transcendent ends, facilities all the greater as its spiritual and intellectual level lowered further, in order to save all that could still be saved, taking into account the conditions inevitably determined by the law of the cycle.

It is by these considerations that one can truly understand the place occupied, in the Hindu tradition, by what is usually designated by the name of “Tantrism,” insofar as it represents the ensemble of teachings and means of “realization” more especially appropriate to the Kali-Yuga. It would therefore be entirely erroneous to see in it a doctrine apart, and all the more so some kind of “system,” as Westerners are always too inclined to do; in truth, it is much rather a certain “spirit,” if one may express it thus, which, in a more or less diffuse way, permeates the entire Hindu tradition in its present form, such that it would be almost impossible to assign to it, within that tradition, precise and well-defined limits.

Moreover, if one considers that the beginning of the Kali-Yuga goes back far beyond so-called “historical” times, one will have to recognize that the very origin of Tantrism, far from being as “late” as some claim,

necessarily escapes the restricted means available to profane investigation. And yet, when we speak here of origin, by making it coincide with that of the Kali-Yuga itself, this is only half true; more precisely, it is true only on the condition of specifying that it is only Tantrism as such that is meant, that is to say, insofar as it is the expression or exterior manifestation of something which, like everything else in the tradition, existed from the beginning in the Veda itself, although it was only formulated more explicitly and developed in its applications when circumstances came to require it.

One thus sees that there is here a double point of view to be considered: on the one hand, one can find Tantrism even in the Veda, since it is included there in principle; but, on the other hand, it can properly be named, as a distinct aspect of the doctrine, only from the moment when it was "explicated" for the reasons we have indicated, and it is in this sense only that it must be considered as particular to the Kali-Yuga.

The designation of what is at issue comes from the fact that the teachings which form its basis are expressed in treatises that bear the generic name of Tantras, a name that has a direct relation with the symbolism of weaving of which we have spoken on other occasions, for, in the proper sense, tantra is the "warp" of a fabric; and we have pointed out that, elsewhere also, one finds words of the same meaning applied to the sacred Books.

These Tantras are often regarded as forming a "fifth Veda," specially destined for the men of the Kali-Yuga; and this would be completely unjustified if they were not, as we have just explained, derived from the Veda understood in its most rigorous acceptation, by way of adaptation to the conditions of a determined epoch. It is moreover important to consider that in reality the Veda is one, in principle and in a certain way "intemporally," before having become triple, then quadruple in its formulation; if it can also be quintuple in the present age, due to the additional developments required by faculties of understanding that are less "open" and can no longer exercise themselves as directly in the order of pure intellectuality, it is evident that this does not affect its

primary unity any more, which is essentially its “perpetual” aspect (sanātana), therefore independent of the particular conditions of any age whatsoever.

The doctrine of the Tantras is therefore, and can only be in sum, a normal development, according to certain points of view, of what is already contained in the Veda, since it is in this, and in this alone, that it can be, as it is in fact, an integral part of the Hindu tradition; and, as for the means of “realization” (sādhana) prescribed by the Tantras, one can indeed say that, by that very fact, they too are legitimately derived from the Veda, since they are at bottom nothing other than the application and the effective implementation of this same doctrine.

If these means, among which one must naturally include, whether as principal or simply accessory, rites of every kind, nonetheless appear to take on a certain character of “novelty” in relation to those that preceded them, it is because there was no reason to envisage them in earlier epochs, except perhaps as pure possibilities, since men then had no need of them and disposed of other means that suited their nature better.

There is here something entirely comparable to what is the special development of a traditional science at this or that epoch, a development that does not constitute any more a spontaneous “appearance” or any kind of “innovation,” since in this case also it can never really be a matter of anything other than an application of principles, therefore of something that had in them at least an implicit pre-existence, and that it was always possible, consequently, to make explicit at any moment, provided there was some reason to do so; but precisely this reason is found in fact only in the contingent circumstances that condition a determined epoch.

Now, that the strictly “Vedic” rites, we mean such as they were “at the beginning,” are no longer presently practicable, this results only too clearly from the sole fact that the soma, which plays a capital role in them, has been lost for a time that it is impossible to evaluate “historically”; and it is well understood that, when we speak here of the

soma, this must be considered as representing an entire ensemble of things whose knowledge, at first manifest and accessible to all, has become hidden in the course of the cycle, at least for ordinary humanity.

It was therefore necessary that there should henceforth be for these things "substitutes" which necessarily could be found only in an order inferior to theirs, which amounts to saying that the "supports" by which a "realization" remained possible became more and more "materialized" from one epoch to another, in conformity with the descending course of cyclical development; a relation such as that of wine to the soma, as regards their ritual use, could serve here as a symbolic example.

This "materialization" must moreover not be understood simply in the most restricted and ordinary sense of the word; as we envisage it, it begins to occur, one might say, as soon as one leaves pure knowledge, which alone is also pure spirituality; and the appeal to elements of a sentimental or volitional order, for example, is not one of the least signs of such a "materialization," even if these elements are employed in a legitimate way, that is to say, if they are taken only as means subordinated to an end that always remains knowledge, since, if it were otherwise, one could no longer in any way speak of "realization," but only of a deviation, a simulacrum, or a parody, all things which, it goes without saying, are rigorously excluded by traditional orthodoxy, under whatever form and at whatever level one may envisage it.

What we have just indicated applies exactly to Tantrism, whose "path," in a general way, appears as more "active" than "contemplative," or, in other terms, as situated rather on the side of "power" than on that of knowledge; and a particularly significant fact, in this respect, is the importance it gives to what is designated as the "path of the hero" (vīra-mārga).

It is evident that vīrya, a term equivalent to the Latin virtus, at least according to the acceptation that the latter had before having been diverted in a "moral" sense by the Stoics, properly expresses the essential and in some way "typical" quality, not of the Brāhmaṇa, but of

the Kṣatriya; and the vīra is distinguished from the paśu, that is to say from the being subjected to the bonds of common existence, less by an effective knowledge than by a voluntary affirmation of "autonomy," which, at this stage, can still, depending on the use he will make of it, divert him from the goal as well as lead him to it.

The danger, in fact, is here that "power" be sought for itself and thus become an obstacle instead of a support, and that the individual come to take himself as his own end; but it goes without saying that this is only deviation and abuse, which never result in the final analysis from anything other than an incomprehension for which the doctrine cannot in any way be held responsible; and, moreover, what we have just said concerns only the "path" as such, not the goal which, in reality, let us insist again, is always the same and can in no case be anything other than knowledge, since it is only by it and in it that the being truly "realizes" himself in all his possibilities.

It is nonetheless true that the means proposed to attain this goal are marked, as they inevitably must be, by the special characters of the Kali-Yuga: one should remember, in this regard, that the proper role of the "hero" is everywhere and always represented as a "quest," which, if it can be crowned with success, also risks leading to failure; and the "quest" itself supposes that there is, when the "hero" appears, something that has been lost previously and that it is for him to rediscover; this task, at the end of which the vīra will become divya, can be defined, if one wishes, as the search for the soma or for the "drink of immortality" (amṛta), which is moreover, from the symbolic point of view, the exact equivalent of what was in the West the "quest of the Grail"; and, by the soma rediscovered, the end of the cycle rejoins its beginning in the "intemporal."

TANTRISM AND MAGIC

It is customary in the West to attribute to Tantrism a "magical" character, or at least to believe that magic plays a predominant role in it; there is here an error of interpretation concerning Tantrism, and perhaps also concerning magic, about which our contemporaries generally have only extremely vague and confused ideas, as we have shown in one of our recent articles.

We shall not return here to this latter point; but, taking magic strictly in its proper sense, and supposing that it is indeed understood thus, we shall only ask what, in Tantrism itself, can give rise to this false interpretation, for it is always more interesting to explain an error than to confine oneself to its pure and simple observation.

First of all, we shall recall that magic, however inferior it may be in itself, is nonetheless an authentic traditional science; as such, it can legitimately have a place among the applications of an orthodox doctrine, provided that it is only the subordinate and very secondary place that suits its essentially contingent character.

On the other hand, given that the effective development of particular traditional sciences is in fact determined by the conditions proper to this or that epoch, it is natural and in a certain way normal that the most contingent among them should develop especially in the period where humanity is the farthest removed from pure intellectuality, that is to say in the Kali-Yuga, and that thus they should there take on, while remaining within the limits assigned to them by their very nature, an importance that they could never have had in earlier periods.

Traditional sciences, whatever they may be, can always serve as "supports" for rising to a higher-order knowledge, and it is this, more than what they are in themselves, that confers upon them a properly doctrinal value; but, as we have said elsewhere, such "supports," in a general way, must become more and more contingent as the cyclical

“descent” is accomplished, in order to remain adapted to the human possibilities of each epoch.

The development of inferior traditional sciences is therefore in sum only a particular case of this necessary “materialization” of “supports” of which we have spoken; but at the same time, it goes without saying that the dangers of deviation become all the greater as one goes further in this direction, and this is why a science such as magic is manifestly among those that most easily give rise to all sorts of deformations and illegitimate uses; deviation, in all cases, is moreover imputable in the final analysis only to the very conditions of this period of “obscuration” that is the Kali-Yuga.

It is easy to understand the direct relation that all these considerations have with Tantrism, a doctrinal form specially adapted to the Kali-Yuga; and if one adds that, as we have indicated elsewhere, Tantrism insists very particularly on “power” as a means and even as a possible basis of “realization,” one will not be surprised that it must thereby grant a fairly considerable importance—one might even say the maximum importance compatible with their relativity—to sciences which, in one way or another, are capable of contributing to the development of this “power” in some domain.

Magic being evidently among these, it is in no way a question of contesting its place; but what must be stated clearly is that it can in no way constitute the essential of Tantrism: to cultivate magic for itself, just as moreover to take for goal the study or the production of “phenomena” of any kind whatsoever, is to enclose oneself in illusion instead of tending to free oneself from it; this is nothing but deviation, and consequently it is no longer Tantrism, an aspect of an orthodox tradition and a “path” destined to lead the being to true “realization.”

One readily recognizes that there is a tantric initiation, but most often without realizing what is really implied by that; everything we have expounded on many occasions concerning the spiritual ends that are those of every regular initiation without any exception dispenses us

from insisting at length on this point.

Magic as such, referring exclusively to the “psychic” domain by definition itself, has assuredly nothing initiatic; therefore, even if it happens that an initiatic ritual makes use of certain apparently “magical” elements, it will necessarily be the case that, by the goal it assigns to them and by the manner in which it employs them in conformity with this goal, it “transforms” them into something of an entirely different order, where the “psychic” will no longer be anything more than a simple “support” of the spiritual; and thus it is no longer at all magic that is involved there in reality, any more than, for example, it is a matter of geometry when one ritually traces a yantra.

The “support” taken in its “materiality,” if one may express it thus, must never be confused with the higher-order character that is essentially conferred upon it by its destination. This confusion can only be the fact of superficial observers, incapable of seeing anything beyond the most exterior formal appearances, which is indeed the case of almost all those who, in the modern West, have wished to concern themselves with these things, and who have always brought to them all the incomprehension inherent in the profane mentality; it is moreover this same confusion which, let us note in passing, is likewise at the starting point of the “naturalist” interpretations they have claimed to give of all traditional symbolism.

To these few observations, we shall add yet another of a somewhat different character: one knows the importance of the tantric elements that have penetrated certain forms of Buddhism, those that are comprised under the general designation of Mahāyāna; but, far from being only a “corrupted” Buddhism, as it is customary to say in the West, these forms represent on the contrary the result of a veritable “rectification” of Buddhism in a traditional and orthodox sense.

That in certain cases one can scarcely speak there of Buddhism except in a kind of “nominal” way matters little; or rather, if one envisages Buddhism properly so called as a specifically heterodox doctrine, this

itself only testifies to the full extent of the “rectification” that has thus been carried out.

One may then pose this question: how could such a thing possibly have been the work of Tantrism, if the latter were truly nothing more or other than magic? There is here a perfectly evident impossibility for anyone who has the slightest knowledge of traditional realities; this is, at bottom, only the very impossibility that the inferior produce the superior, or that the “more” come out of the “less”; but is not this absurdity precisely that which is implied in all the “evolutionist” thought of modern Westerners, and which thereby contributes, for a large part, to irremediably falsifying all their conceptions?

October 1937

CREATION AND MANIFESTATION

We have remarked, on various occasions, that the idea of "creation," if one wishes to understand it in its proper and exact sense and without giving it a more or less abusive extension, is found in reality only in traditions belonging to a single line, that which is constituted by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; this line being that of the traditional forms that may be called specifically religious, one must conclude from this that there exists a direct link between this idea and the religious point of view itself. Everywhere else, the word "creation," if one insists on employing it in certain cases, can only render very inexactly a different idea, for which it would be far preferable to find another expression; moreover, this usage is most often, in fact, only the result of one of those confusions or false assimilations such as are produced so frequently in the West with regard to everything that concerns Eastern doctrines. However, it is not sufficient to avoid this confusion, and one must be just as carefully on guard against another contrary error, that which consists in wanting to see some contradiction or opposition whatsoever between the idea of creation and that other idea to which we have just alluded, and for which the most appropriate term at our disposal is that of "manifestation"; it is on this latter point that we propose to insist at present.

Certain people, indeed, recognizing that the idea of creation is not found in Eastern doctrines (with the exception of Islam, which, of course, cannot be called into question in this respect), immediately claim, and without trying to go further into the matter, that the absence of this idea is the mark of something incomplete or defective, and conclude from this that the doctrines in question could not be considered as an adequate expression of the truth. If such is the case on the religious side, where an unfortunate "exclusivism" is too often asserted, it must be said that there

are also those who, on the anti-religious side, wish to draw from the same observation conclusions that are completely opposite: these latter, naturally attacking the idea of creation as they do all ideas of a religious order, affect to see in its very absence a sort of superiority; moreover, they evidently do so only out of a spirit of negation and opposition, and not in order truly to defend Eastern doctrines, about which they care very little. Be that as it may, these reproaches and these praises are worth no more and are no more acceptable the one than the other, since they proceed in sum from one and the same error, exploited only according to contrary intentions, in conformity with the respective tendencies of those who commit it; the truth is that both sides are entirely mistaken, and that in both cases there is an incomprehension that is approximately equal.

The reason for this common error does not moreover seem very difficult to discover: those whose intellectual horizon does not go beyond Western philosophical conceptions ordinarily imagine that, where there is no question of creation, and where it is nevertheless manifest, on the other hand, that one is not dealing with materialist theories, there can only be “pantheism.” Now one knows how much this word, in our time, is often employed at random: it represents for some a veritable scarecrow, to such an extent that they believe themselves dispensed from seriously examining that to which they have hastened to apply it (the very common usage of the expression “to fall into pantheism” is quite characteristic in this regard), while, probably for this very reason more than for any other, others readily lay claim to it and are entirely disposed to make of it a sort of banner. It is therefore quite clear that what we have just said is closely connected, in the thought of both sides, with the imputation of “pantheism” commonly addressed to the same Eastern doctrines, and whose complete falsity, even absurdity (since pantheism is in reality an essentially anti-metaphysical theory), we have shown often enough that it is unnecessary to return to it once again.

Since we have been led to speak of pantheism, we shall take advantage of this to make immediately an observation that has a certain importance here, concerning a word that one is precisely accustomed to associate

with pantheistic conceptions; this word is that of “emanation,” which certain people, always for the same reasons and as a result of the same confusions, wish to employ in order to designate manifestation when it is not presented under the aspect of creation. Now, at least insofar as it is a question of traditional and orthodox doctrines, this word must be absolutely set aside, not only because of this unfortunate association (whether this latter be more or less justified at bottom, which does not interest us here), but above all because, in itself and by its etymological signification, it truly expresses nothing other than a pure and simple impossibility. Indeed, the idea of “emanation” is properly that of an “issuing forth”; but manifestation must in no way be envisaged thus, for nothing can really issue forth from the Principle; if something were to issue forth from it, the Principle, from then on, could no longer be infinite, and it would find itself limited by the very fact of manifestation; the truth is that outside the Principle, there is and can be only nothingness.

If one even wished to consider “emanation,” not in relation to the supreme and infinite Principle, but only in relation to Being, the immediate principle of manifestation, this term would still give rise to an objection which, though different from the preceding one, is no less decisive: if beings were to issue forth from Being in order to manifest themselves, one could not say that they are truly beings, and they would be properly deprived of all existence, for existence, under whatever mode it may be, can be nothing other than a participation in Being; this consequence, besides being visibly absurd in itself as in the other case, is contradictory with the very idea of manifestation.

These remarks having been made, we shall say clearly that the idea of manifestation, such as Eastern doctrines envisage it in a purely metaphysical manner, is in no way opposed to the idea of creation; they refer only to different levels and to different points of view, in such a way that it suffices to know how to situate each of them in its true place in order to realize that there is between them no incompatibility whatsoever. The difference, in this as in many other points, is in sum only that of the metaphysical point of view and the religious point of

view; now, if it is true that the former is of a higher and more profound order than the latter, it is no less true that it cannot in any way annul or contradict it, which is moreover sufficiently proven by the fact that the one and the other can very well coexist within a single traditional form; we shall, moreover, have to return to this later. Fundamentally, therefore, it is only a question of a difference which, although of a more accentuated degree because of the very clear distinction of the two corresponding domains, is no more extraordinary nor more embarrassing than that of the diverse points of view from which one may legitimately place oneself within a single domain, according as one penetrates it more or less profoundly. We are thinking here of such points of view as, for example, those of Śaṅkarācārya and Rāmānuja with regard to the Vedānta; it is true that there also, incomprehension has wished to find contradictions that in reality do not exist; but this itself only renders the analogy more exact and more complete.

It is moreover appropriate to specify the very sense of the idea of creation, for it seems at times to give rise also to certain misunderstandings: if "to create" is synonymous with "to make from nothing," according to the unanimously accepted definition, but one that is insufficiently explicit, one must assuredly understand by this, above all, from nothing that is exterior to the Principle; in other terms, the latter, in order to be "creator," suffices to itself, and has no need to have recourse to a sort of "substance" situated outside itself and having a more or less independent existence, which, in truth, is moreover inconceivable. One sees immediately that the first reason for being of such a formulation is to affirm expressly that the Principle is not a simple "Demiurge" (and here there is no need to distinguish whether it is a question of the supreme Principle or of Being, for this is equally true in both cases); this does not, however, necessarily mean that every "demiurgic" conception is radically false; but, in any case, it can only find a place at a much lower level and corresponding to a much more restricted point of view, which, situating itself only at some secondary phase of the cosmogonic process, no longer concerns the Principle in any way.

Now, if one confines oneself to speaking of "making from nothing" without specifying further, as is ordinarily done, there is another danger to be avoided: that of considering this "nothing" as a sort of principle, negative without doubt, but from which manifested existence would nevertheless be effectively drawn; this would be to return to an error approximately similar to that against which one has precisely wished to guard by attributing to this "nothing" itself a certain "substantiality"; and, in a sense, this error would even be still more serious than the other, for a formal contradiction would be added to it, that which consists in giving some reality to "nothing," that is to say, in sum, to nothingness. If one were to claim, in order to escape this contradiction, that the "nothing" in question is not pure and simple nothingness, but that it is such only in relation to the Principle, one would still commit in this a double error: on the one hand, one would suppose this time something quite real outside the Principle, and then there would no longer be any true difference with the "demiurgic" conception itself; on the other hand, one would fail to recognize that beings are in no way drawn from this relative "nothing" by manifestation, the finite never ceasing to be strictly nothing with respect to the Infinite.

In what has just been said, and also in all that could be said further on the subject of the idea of creation, there is lacking, as regards the way in which manifestation is considered, something that is nevertheless entirely essential: the very notion of possibility does not appear there; but, let it be well noted, this in no way constitutes a reproach, and such a view, though incomplete, is nonetheless legitimate, for the truth is that this notion of possibility has to intervene only when one places oneself at the metaphysical point of view, and, as we have already said, it is not from this point of view that manifestation is envisaged as creation.

Metaphysically, manifestation necessarily presupposes certain possibilities capable of manifesting themselves; but if it thus proceeds from possibility, one cannot say that it comes from "nothing," for it is evident that possibility is not "nothing"; and, one may perhaps object, is this not precisely contrary to the idea of creation? The answer is very easy: all possibilities are comprised in Total Possibility, which is one

with the Principle itself; it is therefore in this latter, in the final analysis, that they are really contained in a permanent state and from all eternity; moreover, if it were otherwise, it is then that they would truly be "nothing," and there could no longer even be any question of possibilities. Therefore, if manifestation proceeds from these possibilities or from certain of them (we recall here that, besides possibilities of manifestation, there are also to be envisaged possibilities of non-manifestation, at least in the supreme Principle, but no longer when one limits oneself to Being), it does not come from anything that is exterior to the Principle; and this is precisely the sense that we have recognized in the idea of creation correctly understood, so that, fundamentally, the two points of view are not only reconcilable, but even in perfect agreement with one another.

Only, the difference consists in the fact that the point of view to which the idea of creation relates envisages nothing beyond manifestation, or at least envisages the Principle only without deepening further, because it is still only a relative point of view, whereas, on the contrary, at the metaphysical point of view, it is what is in the Principle, that is to say possibility, which is in reality the essential and which matters much more than manifestation in itself.

One could say, all things considered, that these are two different expressions of a single truth, on the condition of adding, of course, that these expressions correspond to two aspects or to two points of view that themselves are really different; but then one may ask whether that one of these two expressions which is the more complete and the more profound would not be fully sufficient, and what is the reason for being of the other. It is, first of all and in a general way, the very reason for being of every exoteric point of view, insofar as it is a formulation of traditional truths limited to what is at once indispensable and accessible to all men without distinction. On the other hand, as concerns the special case in question, there may be motives of "opportunity," so to speak, particular to certain traditional forms, by reason of contingent circumstances to which they must be adapted, and requiring an express safeguard against a conception of the origin of manifestation in a

“demiurgic” mode, whereas such a precaution would be entirely useless elsewhere. However, when one observes that the idea of creation is strictly bound up with the properly religious point of view, one may thereby be led to think that there must be something else still; this is what remains for us to examine now, even if it is not possible for us to enter into all the developments to which this side of the question might give rise.

Whether it be a question of manifestation considered metaphysically or of creation, the complete dependence of manifested beings, in all that they truly are, with respect to the Principle, is affirmed just as clearly and expressly in the one case as in the other; it is only in the more precise way in which this dependence is envisaged on either side that there appears a characteristic difference, which corresponds very exactly to that of the two points of view. At the metaphysical point of view, this dependence is at the same time a “participation”: in all the measure of what they have of reality in themselves, beings participate in the Principle, since all reality is in it; it is no less true, moreover, that these beings, insofar as they are contingent and limited, as well as the entire manifestation of which they form part, are nothing with respect to the Principle, as we said above; but there is in this participation, as it were, a link with it, thus a link between the manifested and the non-manifested, which allows beings to surpass the relative condition inherent in manifestation. The religious point of view, on the contrary, insists rather on the proper nullity of manifested beings, because, by its very nature, it does not have to lead them beyond this condition; and it implies the consideration of dependence under an aspect to which corresponds practically the attitude of al-‘ubūdiyyah, to employ the Arabic term, which the ordinary sense of “servitude” undoubtedly renders only rather imperfectly in this specifically religious acceptation, but sufficiently nonetheless to allow one to understand it better than would the word “adoration” (which moreover corresponds rather to another term of the same root, ‘ibādah); now, the state of ‘abd, thus envisaged, is properly the condition of the “creature” vis-à-vis the “Creator.”

Since we have just borrowed a term from the language of the Islamic tradition, we shall add this: no one would certainly dare to contest that Islam, as regards its religious or exoteric side, is at least as "creationist" as Christianity itself may be; yet, this in no way prevents the fact that, in its esoteric aspect, there is a certain level from which the idea of creation disappears. Thus, there is an aphorism according to which "the Ṣūfī (one must be careful to note that it is not a question here of the simple mutaṣawwuf) is not created" (Eṣ-Ṣūfī lam yukhlaq); this amounts to saying that his state is beyond the condition of "creature," and indeed, insofar as he has realized the "Supreme Identity," thus insofar as he is actually identified with the Principle or with the Uncreated, he can necessarily himself be only uncreated. There, the religious point of view is no less necessarily surpassed, in order to give place to the purely metaphysical point of view; but, if the one and the other can thus coexist in the same tradition, each at the rank that suits it and in the domain that belongs to it properly, this proves very evidently that they do not oppose or contradict one another in any way.

We know that there can be no real contradiction, either within each tradition, or between this one and other traditions, since there are in all of this only diverse expressions of the one Truth. If someone believes he sees apparent contradictions there, should he not therefore conclude quite simply that there is something there that he understands badly or incompletely, instead of pretending to impute to the traditional doctrines themselves defects that, in reality, exist only by reason of his own intellectual insufficiency?

THE CAVE AND THE LABYRINTH

In a recent book of interesting researches[1], taking as his point of departure the passage of the sixth Book of the Aeneid where the doors of the cave of the Sibyl of Cumae are described, Mr. Jackson Knight asks: why are the Labyrinth of Crete and its history depicted on these doors? He quite rightly refuses to see there, as some have done who go no further than modern "literary" conceptions, a simple digression more or less useless; he considers, on the contrary, that this passage must have a real symbolic value, basing himself on a close relation between the labyrinth and the cave, both of them being connected to the same idea of a subterranean journey. This idea, according to the interpretation he gives of concordant facts belonging to epochs and regions very different from one another, would have been originally linked to funerary rites, and would then have been, by virtue of a certain analogy, transferred into initiatic rites; we shall return more particularly to this point presently, but we must first make some reservations concerning the very way in which he conceives initiation.

It seems indeed that he envisages this solely as a product of "human thought," endowed moreover with a vitality that assures it a sort of permanence through the ages, even if at times it subsists, so to speak, only in a latent state; we have no need at all, after all that we have already set forth on this subject, to show anew all that is insufficient there, precisely because there is no account taken of the "supra-human" elements that in reality constitute here the essential. We shall insist only on this: the idea of a subsistence in a latent state leads to the hypothesis of a conservation in a "collective subconscious" borrowed from certain recent psychological theories; whatever one may think of these, there is in any case, in the application that is thus made of them, a complete ignorance of the necessity of the initiatic "chain," that is to say of an effective and uninterrupted transmission. It is true that there is another question that must be carefully avoided from being confused with this

1 W. F. Jackson Knight, Cumean Gates, a Reference of the Sixth Aeneid to Initiation Patterns, Oxford, 1936.

one: it may sometimes have happened that things of a properly initiatic order find expression through individualities who were in no way conscious of their true significance, and we have formerly explained ourselves on this subject with regard to the legend of the Grail; but, on the one hand, this does not in any way touch what concerns initiation itself in its reality, and, on the other hand, one cannot envisage in this way the case of Virgil, in whom there are, just as in Dante, indications that are far too precise and too manifestly conscious for it to be possible to admit that he was foreign to all effective initiatic affiliation. What is in question has nothing to do with "poetic inspiration" as it is understood today, and, in this respect, Mr. J. Knight is certainly too disposed to share the "literary" views to which his thesis nevertheless opposes itself elsewhere; but we must nonetheless recognize all the merit there is, for a university writer, in having the courage to approach such a subject, or even simply to speak of initiation.

That said, let us return to the question of the relations between the funerary cave and the initiatic cave: although these relations are assuredly very real, the identification of the one and the other, as regards their symbolism, represents at most only half of the truth. Let us moreover remark that, even from the sole funerary point of view, the idea of making symbolism derive from ritual, instead of seeing, on the contrary, in ritual itself the symbolism in action that it truly is, already places the author in great embarrassment when he observes that the subterranean journey is almost always followed by a journey in the open air, which many traditions represent as a navigation; this would indeed be inconceivable if it were only a question of an imagistic description of a burial ritual, but is explained on the contrary perfectly when one knows that it is in reality a question of diverse phases traversed by the being in the course of a migration that is truly "from beyond the grave," and which in no way concerns the body that it has left behind it upon quitting terrestrial life.

On the other hand, by reason of the analogy that exists between death understood in the ordinary sense of this word and the initiatic death of which we have spoken on another occasion, one and the same symbolic

description may apply equally to what happens to the being in the one and the other case; there lies, as regards the cave and the subterranean journey, the reason for the assimilation envisaged, insofar as it is justified; but, at the point where it must legitimately stop, one is still only at the preliminaries of initiation, and not at initiation itself.

Indeed, one cannot see, in all rigor, anything more than a preparation for initiation in the death to the profane world, followed by the "descent into Hell" which is, of course, the same thing as the journey into the subterranean world to which the cave gives access; and, as for initiation itself, far from being considered as a death, it is on the contrary considered as a "second birth," as well as a passage from darkness to light. Now the place of this birth is again the cave, at least in the cases where it is in this latter that initiation is accomplished, in fact or symbolically, for it goes without saying that one must not generalize too much and that, just as also for the labyrinth of which we shall speak next, it is not a question of something that is necessarily common to all initiatic forms without exception. The same thing appears, moreover, even exoterically, in the Christian symbolism of the Nativity, just as clearly as in other traditions; and it is evident that the cave as a place of birth cannot have precisely the same signification as the cave as a place of death or of sepulture.

One could however remark, in order at least to connect these different and even apparently opposed aspects with one another, that death and birth are in sum only the two faces of one and the same change of state, and that the passage from one state to another is always regarded as having to take place in obscurity[2]; in this sense, the cave would therefore be, more exactly, the very place of this passage; but this, while being strictly true, still refers only to one of the sides of its complex symbolism.

If the author has not succeeded in seeing the other side of this symbolism, this is very probably due to the influence exercised upon him by the theories of certain "historians of religions": following these

2 One could also recall, in this regard, the symbolism of the grain of wheat in the mysteries of Eleusis.

latter, he admits indeed that the cave must always be connected to "chthonic" cults, doubtless for the somewhat too "simplistic" reason that it is situated within the earth; but this is very far from the truth[3]. Yet, he cannot do otherwise than notice that the initiatic cave is given above all as an image of the world[4]; but his hypothesis prevents him from drawing the consequence that nevertheless imposes itself, which is this: since it is so, this cave must form a complete whole and contain within itself the representation of heaven as well as that of earth; if it happens that heaven is expressly mentioned in some text or figured in some monument as corresponding to the vault of the cave, the explanations proposed on this subject become so confused and so unsatisfactory that it is no longer possible to follow them. The truth is that, far from being a dark place, the initiatic cave is illuminated interiorly, so that it is on the contrary outside of it that darkness reigns, the profane world being naturally assimilated to the "outer darkness," and the "second birth" being at the same time an "illumination"[5]. Now, if one asks why the cave is envisaged in this way from the initiatic point of view, we shall reply that the solution of this question is found, on the one hand, in the fact that the symbol of the cave is complementary to that of the mountain, and, on the other hand, in the relation that closely unites the symbolism of the cave to that of the heart; we propose to treat these two essential points separately, but it is not difficult to understand, from all that we have already had occasion to set forth elsewhere, that what is in question is in direct relation with the very representation of spiritual centers.

We shall pass over other questions which, however important they may

3 This unilateral interpretation leads him to a singular mistake: he cites, among other examples, the Shinto myth of the dance executed before the entrance of a cave in order to make the "ancestral goddess" come out who had hidden herself there; unfortunately for his thesis, it is not at all a question of the "earth-mother," as he believes and even says expressly, but indeed of the solar goddess, which is quite different.

4 In Freemasonry, it is the same with the Lodge, whose designation some have even compared with the Sanskrit word guhā, which is symbolically exact, if not etymologically; but it must be added that the Lodge is not assimilated to the cave, and that the equivalent of this latter is found only, in this case, at the very beginning of the initiatic trials, so that there attaches to it no other sense than that of a subterranean place, in direct relation with the ideas of death and of "descent."

5 In Masonic symbolism also, and for the same reasons, the "lights" are obligatorily found within the Lodge; and the word guhā, which we recalled a moment ago, is also directly connected to a root whose primary sense designates light.

be in themselves, intervene here only accessorily, such as, for example, that of the signification of the "golden bough"; it is very contestable that one can identify this latter, except perhaps under a very secondary aspect, with the staff or wand which, under diverse forms, are encountered very generally in traditional symbolism[6]. Without insisting further on this, we shall examine, in a second part, what concerns the labyrinth, whose meaning may appear still more enigmatic, or at least more concealed, than that of the cave, and the relations that exist between the one and the other.

6 It would certainly be much more correct to assimilate this "golden bough" to the druidic mistletoe and to the Masonic acacia, without speaking of the "branches" of the Christian feast that bears precisely this name, insofar as symbol and pledge of resurrection and immortality.

November 1937

THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

We reproduce below an article published under this title in June 1930 by Mr. René Guénon in the review Le Monde Nouveau. Our readers will find recalled here ideas that are familiar to them, but they will also find, concerning the role of India, views that the author has perhaps never expressed elsewhere with as much force and precision; and these considerations seemed to us sufficiently important to justify the reprinting of this article.
N. D. L. R.

The opposition between East and West, reduced to its simplest terms, is at bottom identical with that which one often likes to establish between contemplation and action. We have already explained ourselves on this subject on many occasions, and we have examined the different points of view from which one may place oneself in order to consider the relations between these two terms: are these really two contraries, or would they not rather be two complementaries, or again would there not in reality be between the one and the other a relation, not of coordination, but of subordination?

We shall therefore here only very briefly summarize these considerations, indispensable to whoever wishes to understand the spirit of the East in general and that of India in particular.

The point of view that consists in purely and simply opposing contemplation and action to one another is the most exterior and the most superficial of all. The opposition does indeed exist in appearances, but it cannot be absolutely irreducible; moreover, the same could be said of all contraries, which cease to be such as soon as one rises above a certain level, that at which their opposition has all its reality. To say

opposition or contrast is thereby to say disharmony or imbalance, that is to say something that can exist only under a particular and limited point of view; in the totality of things, equilibrium is made of the sum of all imbalances, and all partial disorders contribute, willingly or unwillingly, to the total order.

By considering contemplation and action as complementary, one places oneself at a point of view already deeper and truer than the preceding one, because the opposition is there reconciled and resolved, its two terms balancing one another in a certain way. It would then be a matter of two equally necessary elements that complete and support one another, and that constitute the double activity, interior and exterior, of one and the same being, whether it be each man taken individually or humanity envisaged collectively. This conception is assuredly more harmonious and more satisfying than the first; however, if one were to adhere to it exclusively, one would be tempted, by virtue of the correlation thus established, to place contemplation and action on the same level, so that one would only have to strive to keep the balance as equal as possible between them, without ever posing the question of any superiority of one in relation to the other.

Now, in fact, this question has always been posed, and, as concerns the antithesis of East and West, we can say that it consists precisely in this: that the East maintains the superiority of contemplation, whereas the West, and especially the modern West, on the contrary affirms the superiority of action over contemplation. Here, it is no longer a question of points of view each of which may have its reason for being and be accepted at least as the expression of a relative truth; a relation of subordination being irreversible, the two conceptions in presence are really contradictory, therefore exclusive of one another, so that necessarily one is true and the other false. One must therefore choose, and perhaps the necessity of this choice has never imposed itself with as much force and urgency as in present circumstances; perhaps it will impose itself even more in the near future.

In those of our works to which we have alluded above (1), we have set

forth that contemplation is superior to action, just as the immutable is superior to change. Action, being only a transitory and momentary modification of being, cannot have in itself its principle and sufficient reason; if it is not attached to a principle that is beyond its contingent domain, it is nothing but a pure illusion; and this principle from which it draws all the reality of which it is capable, both its existence and even its very possibility, can be found only in contemplation or, if one prefers, in knowledge.

Likewise, change, in its most general acceptation, is unintelligible and contradictory, that is to say impossible, without a principle from which it proceeds and which, by the very fact that it is its principle, cannot be subject to it, therefore is necessarily immutable; and this is why, in Western antiquity, Aristotle had affirmed the necessity of the "unmoved mover" of all things. It is evident that action belongs to the world of change, of "becoming"; knowledge alone makes it possible to leave this world and the limitations inherent in it, and, when it attains the immutable, it itself possesses immutability, for all knowledge is essentially identification with its object.

This is precisely what modern Westerners ignore, who, in matters of knowledge, no longer envisage anything but a rational and discursive knowledge, therefore indirect and imperfect, what one might call a knowledge by reflection, and who, more and more, do not even value this inferior knowledge except insofar as it can serve directly practical ends; engaged in action to the point of denying everything that surpasses it, they do not perceive that this very action thus degenerates, for lack of principle, into an agitation as vain as it is sterile.

In the social organization of India, which is nothing but an application of metaphysical doctrine to the human order, the relations of knowledge and action are represented by those of the two first castes, the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas, of which they are respectively the proper functions. It is said that the Brāhmaṇa is the type of stable beings, and that the Kṣatriya is the type of mobile or changing beings; thus, all the beings of this world, according to their nature, are principally in relation

with the one or with the other, for there is a perfect correspondence between the cosmic order and the human order.

This does not mean, of course, that action is forbidden to the Brāhmaṇa, nor knowledge to the Kṣatriya, but they suit them, as it were, only accidentally and not essentially; the svadharma, the proper law of the caste, in conformity with the nature of the being who belongs to it, is in knowledge for the Brāhmaṇa, in action for the Kṣatriya. Thus the Brāhmaṇa is superior to the Kṣatriya, just as knowledge is superior to action; in other terms, spiritual authority is superior to temporal power, and it is by recognizing its subordination with respect to the former that the latter will be legitimate, that is to say that it will truly be what it ought to be; otherwise, separating itself from its principle, it can only be exercised in a disordered manner and will inevitably go to its ruin.

To the Kṣatriyas normally belongs all exterior power, since the domain of action is the exterior world; but this power is nothing without an interior, purely spiritual principle, which the authority of the Brāhmaṇas incarnates, and in which it finds its sole valid guarantee. In exchange for this guarantee, the Kṣatriyas must, with the help of the force at their disposal, assure to the Brāhmaṇas the means of accomplishing in peace, sheltered from disturbance and agitation, their own function of knowledge and teaching; this is what is represented under the figure of Skanda, the Lord of War, protecting the meditation of Gaṇeśa, the Lord of Knowledge.

Such are the regular relations of spiritual authority and temporal power; and if they were everywhere and always observed, no conflict could ever arise between the one and the other, each occupying the place that must return to it by virtue of the hierarchy of functions and beings, a hierarchy strictly in conformity with the nature of things.

One sees that the place that is made for the Kṣatriyas, and consequently for action, while being subordinate, is very far from negligible, since it comprises all exterior power, at once military, administrative, and judicial, which is synthesized in the royal function. The Brāhmaṇas have

to exercise only an invisible authority, which, as such, may be ignored by the vulgar, but which is nonetheless the principle of all visible power; this authority is like the pivot around which all things turn, the fixed axis around which the world accomplishes its revolution, the immutable center that directs and regulates cosmic movement without participating in it; and this is what is represented by the ancient symbol of the svastika, which is, for this reason, one of the attributes of Gaṇeśa.

It must be added that the place that should be made for action will, in application, be more or less great according to circumstances; indeed, it is the same with peoples as with individuals, and, whereas the nature of some is especially contemplative, that of others is especially active. There is doubtless no country where the aptitude for contemplation is as widespread and as generally developed as in India; and this is why the latter can be considered as representing par excellence the Oriental spirit.

On the contrary, among Western peoples, it is quite certain that it is the aptitude for action that predominates in the greatest number of men, and that, even if this tendency were not exaggerated and deviated as it is at present, it would nevertheless subsist, so that contemplation could never there be anything but the affair of a much more restricted elite. That would nevertheless suffice for everything to return to order, for spiritual power, quite unlike material force, is in no way based on number; but, at present, Westerners are truly nothing but men without caste, none of them occupying the place and function that would suit his nature.

This disorder is even rapidly spreading, one must not conceal it, and seems to be encroaching even upon the East, although it still affects it only in a very superficial way and much more limited than those who, knowing only more or less Westernized Orientals, imagine, do not suspect the little importance that these have in reality.

It is nonetheless true that there is here a danger which, despite everything, risks becoming aggravated, at least transitorily; the “Western peril” is not an empty word, and the West, which is itself its

first victim, seems to want to drag all humanity into the ruin with which it is threatened by its own fault.

This peril is that of disordered action, because deprived of its principle; such action is in itself nothing but pure nothingness, and it can lead only to a catastrophe. Yet, one will say, if this exists, it is because this very disorder must finally reenter the universal order, that it is an element of it in the same way as everything else; and, from a higher point of view, this is rigorously true. All beings, whether they know it or not, whether they will it or not, depend entirely on their principle in all that they are; disordered action itself is possible only through the principle of all action, but, because it is unconscious of this principle, because it does not recognize the dependence in which it stands with regard to it, it is without rule and without positive efficacy, and, if one may so express oneself, it possesses only the lowest degree of reality, that which is closest to pure and simple illusion, precisely because it is the farthest from the principle, in which alone is absolute reality.

From the point of view of the principle, there is only order; but from the point of view of contingencies, disorder exists, and, as concerns terrestrial humanity, we are at an epoch where this disorder appears to triumph.

One may ask why this is so, and Hindu doctrine, with the theory of cosmic cycles, provides an answer to this question. We are in the Kali-Yuga, in the dark age where spirituality is reduced to its minimum, by the very laws of the development of the human cycle, bringing about a sort of progressive materialization through its various periods, of which this one is the last; by human cycle, we understand here solely the duration of a Manvantara. Toward the end of this age, everything is confused, the castes are mixed, the family itself no longer exists; is this not exactly what we see around us?

Must one conclude from this that the present cycle is indeed touching its end, and that we shall soon see the dawn of a new Manvantara? One might be tempted to believe it, especially if one thinks of the increasing

speed with which events precipitate themselves; but perhaps disorder has not yet reached its most extreme point, perhaps humanity must descend still lower, into the excesses of a wholly material civilization, before being able to rise again toward the principle and toward spiritual and divine realities.

In any case, little does it matter: whether a little sooner or a little later, this descending development that modern Westerners call “progress” will find its limit, and then the “black age” will come to an end; then will appear the Kalkin-avatāra, He who is mounted on the white horse, who bears on his head a triple diadem, sign of sovereignty in the three worlds, and who holds in his hand a flaming sword like the tail of a comet; then the world of disorder and error will be destroyed, and, by the purifying and regenerating power of Agni, all things will be reestablished and restored in the integrity of their primordial state, the end of the present cycle being at the same time the beginning of the future cycle.

Those who know that it must be thus cannot, even in the midst of the worst confusion, lose their immutable serenity; however unfortunate it may be to live in an epoch of trouble and almost general obscurity, they cannot be affected by it in the depths of themselves, and this is what constitutes the strength of the true elite. Doubtless, if obscurity must still go on extending more and more, this elite may, even in the East, be reduced to a very small number; but it suffices that a few preserve integrally true knowledge, in order to be ready, when the times are fulfilled, to save all that can still be saved of the present world, and that will become the germ of the future world.

This role of preservation of the traditional spirit, with all that it truly implies when one understands it in its deepest sense, it is the East alone that can fulfill at present; we do not mean to say the entire East, since unfortunately the disorder that comes from the West can reach it in certain of its elements; but it is in the East alone that there still subsists a true elite, in which the traditional spirit is found with all its vitality.

Elsewhere, what remains of it is reduced to exterior forms whose significance has long since been more or less misunderstood, and, if something of the West can be saved, it will only be possible with the help of the East; but it will still be necessary that this help, in order to be effective, find a point of support in the Western world, and these are possibilities concerning which it would at present be very difficult to bring any precision.

Be that as it may, India has in a certain sense, in the ensemble of the East, a privileged situation under the aspect that we are considering, and the reason for this is that, without the traditional spirit, India would no longer be anything. Indeed, Hindu unity (we do not say Indian) is not a unity of race nor of language; it is exclusively a unity of tradition; Hindus are all those who effectively adhere to this tradition, and only those.

This explains what we said previously about the aptitude for contemplation, more general in India than anywhere else: participation in the tradition, in fact, is fully effective only insofar as it implies the comprehension of the doctrine, and this consists above all in metaphysical knowledge, since it is in the purely metaphysical order that the principle is found from which all the rest derives.

This is why India appears as more particularly destined to maintain to the end the supremacy of contemplation over action, to oppose by its elite an insurmountable barrier to the invasion of the modern Western spirit, to preserve intact, in the midst of a world agitated by incessant changes, the consciousness of the permanent, of the immutable, and of the eternal.

It must be clearly understood, moreover, that what is immutable is the principle alone, and that the applications to which it gives rise in all domains can and even must vary according to circumstances and epochs, for, whereas the principle is absolute, the applications are relative and contingent like the world to which they relate. Tradition allows indefinitely multiple and diverse adaptations in their modalities;

but all these adaptations, insofar as they are made rigorously according to the traditional spirit, are nothing other than the normal development of certain consequences that are eternally contained in the principle; it is therefore in all cases only a matter of rendering explicit what was hitherto implicit, and thus the foundation, the very substance of the doctrine, always remains identical beneath all the differences of exterior forms.

The applications may be of many kinds: such are notably, not only the social institutions to which we have already alluded, but also the sciences, when they are truly what they ought to be; and this shows the essential difference that exists between the conception of these traditional sciences and that of the sciences as the modern Western spirit has constituted them. Whereas the former derive all their value from their attachment to metaphysical doctrine, the latter, under the pretext of independence, are narrowly shut up within themselves and can only claim to push ever farther, but without leaving their limited domain or retreating its boundaries by a single step, an analysis that could thus be pursued indefinitely without one ever being any further advanced in true knowledge of things.

Is it by an obscure feeling of this impotence that moderns have come to prefer research to knowledge, or is it quite simply because this endless research satisfies their need for incessant agitation, which wants to be its own end? What could Orientals do with these vain sciences that the West claims to bring them, when they possess other sciences incomparably more real and more vast, and when the slightest effort of intellectual concentration teaches them far more than all these fragmentary and dispersed views, this chaotic mass of facts and notions that are linked only by hypotheses more or less fanciful, laboriously constructed only to be immediately overthrown and replaced by others no better founded?

And let one not overly extol, believing thereby to compensate for all their defects, the industrial and technical applications to which these sciences have given birth; no one thinks of contesting that they at least

have this practical utility, if their speculative value is rather illusory; but this is something in which the East can never truly take an interest, and it values these wholly material advantages too little to sacrifice its spirit for them, because it knows what is the immense superiority of the point of view of contemplation over that of action, and that all things that pass are nothingness in regard to the eternal.

True India, for us, is therefore not this more or less modernized, that is to say Westernized, India dreamed of by some young men educated in the Universities of Europe or America, and who, however proud they may be of the wholly exterior knowledge that they have acquired there, are nevertheless, from the Oriental point of view, nothing but perfect ignoramuses, constituting, in spite of their pretensions, the very opposite of an intellectual elite in the sense in which we understand it.

True India is that which always remains faithful to the teaching that its elite transmits through the centuries; it is that which integrally preserves the deposit of a tradition whose source goes back higher and farther than humanity; it is the India of Manu and of the Ṛṣis, the India of Śrī Rāma and of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

We know that this was not always the land designated today by this name; doubtless even, since the primitive Arctic sojourn of which the Veda speaks, it successively occupied many different geographical situations; perhaps it will occupy others still, but little does it matter, for it is always there where the seat of this great tradition is found, whose maintenance among men is its mission and its reason for being.

By the uninterrupted chain of its Sages, its Gurus, and its Yogīs, it subsists through all the vicissitudes of the exterior world, unshakable like Meru; it will endure as long as the Sanātana Dharma (which one could translate as lex perennis, as exactly as a Western language permits), and it will never cease to contemplate all things, through the frontal eye of Śiva, in the serene immutability of the eternal present.

All hostile efforts will finally be shattered against the sole force of truth,

as clouds dissipate before the sun, even if they have succeeded in obscuring it momentarily from our sight. The destructive action of time leaves subsisting only that which is superior to time: it will devour all those who have limited their horizon to the world of change and placed all reality in becoming, those who have made a religion of the contingent and the transitory, for “he who sacrifices to a god will become the food of that god”; but what could it do against those who bear within themselves the consciousness of eternity?

THE CAVE AND THE LABYRINTH

(continued)[*]

The labyrinth, as M. J. Knight has rightly seen, has a double reason for being, in the sense that it allows or forbids, depending on the case, access to a certain place into which all must not enter indiscriminately; only those who are "qualified" will be able to traverse it to the end, while the others will be prevented from entering it or will lose their way along the route. One sees immediately that there is here the idea of a "selection" which is in evident relation with admission to initiation; the course of the labyrinth is therefore, in this respect, nothing other than a representation of initiatic trials; and it is easy to conceive that, when it served effectively as a means of access to certain sanctuaries, it could be arranged in such a way that the corresponding rites were accomplished within this course itself. Moreover, one finds here again the idea of a "journey," under the aspect in which it is assimilated to the trials themselves, as one may still observe at present in certain initiatic forms, in Freemasonry for example, where each of the symbolic trials is precisely designated as a "journey."

Another equivalent symbolism is that of the "pilgrimage"; and we recall in this connection the labyrinths formerly traced on the paving of certain churches, whose traversal was regarded as a "substitute" for pilgrimage to the Holy Land; moreover, if the point at which this course arrives represents a place reserved for the "elect," this place is indeed truly a "Holy Land" in the initiatic sense of this expression; in other terms, this point is nothing other than the image of a spiritual center, just as every place of initiation equally is.[1]

It goes without saying, on the other hand, that the use of the labyrinth as a means of defense or protection is susceptible of diverse applications

**See the October 1937 issue.*

1 M. J. Knight mentions these labyrinths, but attributes to them a simply religious signification; he seems to ignore that they pertain in no way to esoteric doctrine, but solely to the symbolism of initiatic organizations.

outside the initiatic domain; thus the author notes in particular its "tactical" use at the entrance of certain ancient cities and other fortified places. However, it is an error to believe that in this case it is a question of a purely profane usage, which would even have been the earliest in date and would then have suggested the idea of ritual usage; there is here properly a reversal of normal relationships, which is moreover in conformity with modern conceptions, but with these alone, and which it is therefore entirely illegitimate to attribute to ancient civilizations. In fact, in every civilization having a strictly traditional character, all things necessarily begin with the principle, or with what is closest to it, and from there descend to increasingly contingent applications; and, in addition, even these latter are never envisaged from the profane point of view, which is, as we have already often explained, only the result of a degeneration that has caused the loss of awareness of their attachment to the principle. In the case in question, one could fairly easily perceive that there is something other than what modern "tacticians" would see there, by the simple observation that this "labyrinthine" mode of defense was not employed solely against human enemies, but also against hostile psychic influences, which clearly indicates that it must have possessed in itself a ritual value.[2]

But there is more still: the foundation of cities, the choice of their location, and the plan according to which they were constructed were subject to rules that pertained essentially to "sacred science," and which consequently were very far from responding only to "utilitarian" ends, at least in the exclusively material sense currently given to this word; however foreign these things may be to the mentality of our contemporaries, one must nevertheless take them into account, failing which those who study the vestiges of ancient civilizations will never be able to understand the true meaning and the reason for being of what they observe there, even for what corresponds simply to what is today agreed to be called the domain of "ordinary life," but which then also in

2 We shall not insist, in order not to stray too far from the subject, on the "labyrinthine" character of certain processions which, presenting above all the character of rites of protection or "apotropaic" rites as the author says, are directly connected with the same order of considerations: it is essentially a matter of irritating and diverting harmful influences, by a "technique" based on knowledge of certain laws according to which these influences exercise their action.

reality possessed a properly ritual and traditional character.

As for the origin of the very name of the labyrinth, it is rather obscure and has given rise to many discussions; it seems indeed that, contrary to what some have thought, it is not directly connected to that of the labrys or Cretan double axe, but that both derive equally from the same very ancient word designating stone (root la, whence laos in Greek, lapis in Latin), so that, etymologically, the labyrinth might in sum be nothing other than a stone construction, belonging to the class of constructions called "cyclopean." However, this is only the most exterior signification of this name, which, in a deeper sense, is connected with the whole ensemble of the symbolism of the stone, of which we have had occasion to speak on various occasions, whether with regard to the "betyls" or with regard to the "thunderstones" (identified precisely with the stone axe or labrys), and which still presents many other aspects. M. J. Smith has at least glimpsed this, for he alludes to men "born of stone" (which, let us note in passing, provides the explanation of the Greek word laos), of whom the legend of Deucalion offers the best-known example: this relates to a certain period whose more precise study, if it were possible, would assuredly allow one to give the so-called "Stone Age" a quite different meaning from that attributed to it by prehistorians.

We are moreover brought back by this to the cave, which, insofar as it is hollowed out in rock, naturally or artificially, also pertains rather closely to the same symbolism;[3] but we must add that this is not a reason to suppose that the labyrinth itself must necessarily also have been hollowed out in rock: although this may have been the case in certain instances, this is only an accidental element, one might say, and cannot enter into its very definition, for whatever the relations of the cave and the labyrinth may be, it is nevertheless important not to confuse them, especially when it is a question of the initiatic cave, which we have here more particularly in view.

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3 Prehistoric caves were very probably not habitations, as is ordinarily believed, but the sanctuaries of the "men of stone," understood in the sense we have just indicated; it is therefore within the traditional forms of the period in question that the cave would have received, in relation to a certain "occultation" of knowledge, the character of symbol of spiritual centers, and consequently of a place of initiation.

Indeed, it is quite evident that if the cave is the place where initiation itself is accomplished, the labyrinth, the place of the preliminary trials, can be nothing more than the path that leads to it, at the same time as the obstacle that forbids access to profane "non-qualified" persons. We moreover recall that at Cumae it was on the doors that the labyrinth was represented, as if, in a certain way, this representation here took the place of the labyrinth itself;[4] and one could say that Aeneas, while stopping at the entrance to contemplate it, in fact traverses the labyrinth mentally, if not bodily. On the other hand, it does not appear that this mode of access was always exclusively reserved for sanctuaries established in caves or symbolically assimilated to them, since, as we have already indicated, this is not a feature common to all traditional forms; and the reason for being of the labyrinth, as defined above, may equally well suit the approaches to any place of initiation, any sanctuary destined for the "mysteries" and not for public rites. This reservation having been made, there is nevertheless reason to think that, at least originally, the use of the labyrinth must have been linked more particularly to that of the initiatic cave: this is because both appear to have belonged at first to the same traditional forms, those of that period of the "men of stone" to which we have just alluded; they would thus have begun by being closely united, even though they did not remain so invariably in all later forms.

If we consider the case in which the labyrinth is in connection with the cave, the latter, which it surrounds with its windings and to which it ultimately leads, thereby occupies, in the ensemble thus constituted, the most interior and central point, which corresponds well to the idea of the spiritual center and also agrees with the equivalent symbolism of the heart, to which we propose to return. One must further remark that when the same cave is at once the place of initiatic death and that of the "second birth," it must from then on be regarded as giving access not only to subterranean or "infernal" domains, but also to supra-terrestrial domains; this again corresponds to the notion of the central point, which is, both in the macrocosmic order and in the microcosmic order, that at

4 A similar case, in this respect, is that of "labyrinthine" figures traced on walls, in ancient Greece, to forbid access to houses by harmful influences.

which communication with all superior and inferior states is effected; and it is only thus that the cave can be, as we have said, the complete image of the world, insofar as all these states must be reflected there equally; were it otherwise, the assimilation of its vault to the sky would be absolutely incomprehensible.

But, on the other hand, if it is in the cave itself that, between initiatic death and the "second birth," the "descent into Hell" is accomplished, one sees that one must take great care not to consider this descent as represented by the traversal of the labyrinth, and then one may still ask to what the latter corresponds in reality: these are the "outer darkness," to which we have already alluded, and to which perfectly applies the state of "wandering," if one may employ this word, of which such a traversal is the exact expression. This question of the "outer darkness" could still give rise to further clarifications, but this would lead us beyond the limits of the present article; moreover, we believe we have said enough to show, on the one hand, the interest presented by researches such as those expounded in the book of M. J. Knight, but also, on the other hand, the necessity, in order to establish their results correctly and to grasp their true scope, of a properly "technical" knowledge of what is involved—knowledge without which one will never arrive at anything other than hypothetical and incomplete reconstructions which, even insofar as they are not falsified by some preconceived idea, will remain as "dead" as the vestiges themselves that served as their point of departure.

December 1937

THE SENSE OF PROPORTIONS

It happens to us very often, in observing the confusion that reigns in our epoch in all domains, to insist on the necessity, in order to escape it, of knowing how to put everything in its place, that is to say, to situate it exactly in relation to the others, according to its own nature and importance. This is indeed what most of our contemporaries no longer know how to do, and this is because they no longer have the notion of any true hierarchy; this notion, which is in a way at the base of every traditional civilization, is, for that very reason, one of those which the forces of subversion—whose action has produced what is called the modern spirit—have more especially set themselves to destroy.

Thus mental disorder is everywhere today, even among those who call themselves "traditionalists" (and moreover we have already shown how insufficient what this word implies is for reacting effectively against such a state of things); the sense of proportions, in particular, is strangely lacking, to such a point that one commonly sees not only what is most contingent or even most insignificant taken for the essential, but also the normal and the abnormal, the legitimate and the illegitimate, placed on a footing of equality, as if the one and the other were, so to speak, equivalent and had the same right to existence.

A fairly characteristic example of this state of mind is furnished to us by a "neo-Thomist" philosopher[1] who, in a recent article, declares that, in "civilizations of the sacred type" (we would say traditional), such as Islamic civilization or medieval Christian civilization, "the notion of holy war could have a meaning," but that it "loses all significance" in

1 To be precise, in order to avoid any ambiguity or contestation, we specify that, by using the expression "neo-Thomism," we intend to designate by it an attempt at "adaptation" of Thomism, which does not occur without rather serious concessions to modern ideas, by which even those who willingly proclaim themselves "anti-modern" are sometimes affected much more than one might believe; our epoch is full of similar contradictions.

“civilizations of the profane type” such as that of today, “where the temporal, more perfectly differentiated from the spiritual and henceforth fully autonomous, no longer has an instrumental role with regard to the sacred.”

Does not this way of expressing oneself seem to indicate that one is not far, at bottom, from seeing there a “progress,” or that, at the very least, one considers that this is something definitively acquired and on which “henceforth” there is no longer any reason to return? We would moreover like to be cited at least one other example of “civilizations of the profane type,” for our part we do not know a single one outside modern civilization, which, precisely because it is such, properly represents only an anomaly; the plural seems to have been put there expressly to allow a parallelism to be established, or, as we were saying earlier, an equivalence, between this “profane type” and the “sacred type” or traditional type, which is that of every normal civilization without exception.

It goes without saying that, if it were only a matter of the simple observation of a state of fact, this would give rise to no objection; but from this observation to the acceptance of this state as constituting a legitimate form of civilization on the same level as that of which it is the negation, there is truly an abyss. That one should say that the notion of “holy war” is inapplicable in present circumstances is a fact too evident for anyone not to agree with it; but one must not say for that reason that this notion no longer has any meaning, for the intrinsic value of an idea, and especially of a traditional idea such as this one, is entirely independent of contingencies and has not the least relation to what is called “historical reality”; it belongs to an entirely different order of reality.

To make the value of an idea—that is to say, in sum, its very truth (for, once it is a question of an idea, we do not see what its value could be otherwise)—depend on the vicissitudes of human events, that is precisely the characteristic of that “historicism” whose error we have denounced on other occasions, and which is only one of the forms of

modern “relativism”; that a “traditionalist” philosopher should share this way of seeing is something that is indeed most unfortunately significant!

And if he accepts the profane point of view as just as valid as the traditional point of view, instead of seeing in it only the degeneration or deviation which it is in reality, what could he possibly still find to object to in that all-too-famous “tolerance,” an attitude quite specifically modern and profane as well, and which consists, as is known, in granting to any error the same rights as to truth?

We have dwelt at some length on this example, because it is truly very representative of a certain mentality; but of course one could easily find a great number of others, in an order of ideas more or less close to this one. To the same tendencies is ultimately connected the undue importance attributed to the profane sciences by the more or less authorized (but in any case very poorly qualified) representatives of traditional doctrines, going so far as constantly to strive to “accommodate” these doctrines to the more or less hypothetical and always provisional results of those sciences, as if there could be a common measure between the one and the other, and as if they were things situated on the same level.

Such an attitude, whose weakness is particularly evident in “religious apologetics,” shows, in those who believe they must adopt it, a very strange ignorance of the value—we would readily say of the dignity—of the doctrines they imagine they are defending in this way, whereas they do nothing but lower and diminish them; and they are thus imperceptibly and unconsciously led into the worst compromises, plunging headlong into the trap set for them by those who aim only to destroy everything that has a traditional character, and who, for their part, know very well what they are doing by bringing them onto this ground of vain profane discussion.

It is only by maintaining in an absolute manner the transcendence of tradition that one renders it (or rather keeps it) inaccessible to any attack by its enemies, whom one should never consent to treat as

“adversaries”; but, for lack of a sense of proportions and hierarchy, who still understands this today?

We have just spoken of the concessions made to the scientific point of view, in the sense in which the modern world understands it; but the too frequent illusions regarding the value and scope of the philosophical point of view also imply an error of perspective of the same kind, since this point of view, by definition itself, is no less profane than the other. One should be able to content oneself with smiling at the pretensions of those who want to place purely human “systems,” products of simple individual thought, in parallel or in opposition with traditional doctrines, which are essentially supra-human, if they did not succeed all too often, in many cases, in having these pretensions taken seriously.

If the consequences are perhaps less grave, this is only because philosophy has, on the general mentality of our epoch, a more limited influence than that of profane science; but nevertheless, here again, one would be quite wrong, because the danger does not appear as immediately, to conclude that it is nonexistent or negligible. Moreover, even if there were no other result in this regard than to “neutralize” the efforts of many “traditionalists” by leading them astray into a domain from which there is no real profit to be drawn with a view to a restoration of the traditional spirit, this is always so much gained for the enemy; the reflections we have already made on another occasion, concerning certain illusions of a political or social order, would also find their application in such a case.

From this philosophical point of view, it even happens sometimes—let us say so in passing—that things take on a rather amusing turn: we mean the “reactions” of certain “disputants” of this sort, when they find themselves by some extraordinary chance in the presence of someone who formally refuses to follow them onto this terrain, and the astonishment mixed with spite, even with rage, that they experience upon realizing that all their argumentation falls into the void, something to which they can all the less resign themselves as they are obviously incapable of understanding the reasons for it.

We have even had dealings with people who claimed to oblige us to accord, to the little constructions of their own individual fantasy, an interest that we must reserve exclusively for traditional truths alone; we could naturally only oppose them with a refusal to entertain the matter, from which resulted fits of fury truly indescribable; then it is no longer only the sense of proportions that is lacking, it is also the sense of the ridiculous!

But let us return to more serious matters: since it is a question here of errors of perspective, we shall point out still another which, in truth, is of an entirely different order, for it occurs within the traditional domain itself; and it is, in sum, only a particular case of the difficulty that men generally have in admitting what goes beyond their own point of view.

That certain people, who are moreover the great majority, have their horizon limited to a single traditional form, or even to a certain aspect of that form, and are consequently enclosed in a point of view that could be called more or less narrowly "local," is something perfectly legitimate in itself, and indeed entirely inevitable; but what, on the other hand, is in no way acceptable is that they imagine that this same point of view, with all the limitations inherent in it, must equally be that of everyone without exception, including those who have become conscious of the essential unity of all traditions.

Against those, whoever they may be, who give proof of such an incomprehension, we must maintain, in the most unshakable manner, the rights of those who have risen to a higher level, from which the perspective is necessarily entirely different; that they bow before what they are, at least for the present, incapable of understanding themselves, and that they not meddle in anything that is not within their competence—this is, at bottom, all that we ask of them.

We willingly recognize, moreover, that as far as they are concerned, their limited point of view is not without certain advantages, first because it allows them intellectually to confine themselves to something

fairly simple and to be satisfied with it, and secondly because, by reason of the wholly “local” position in which they are confined, they are assuredly a nuisance to no one, which spares them from arousing against themselves hostile forces that they would probably be quite incapable of resisting.

THE HEART AND THE CAVE

We have already mentioned the close relationship between the symbolism of the cave and that of the heart, which explains the initiatic function of the cave as spiritual centre. In fact, the heart is essentially a symbol of the centre, whether it be the centre of a being or, analogously, of a world, that is, whether the standpoint be microcosmic or macrocosmic. It is therefore natural, given such a relationship, that the same meaning should be likewise attached to the cave; but that symbolic connection itself calls at this point for a fuller explanation.

The 'cave of the heart' is a well known traditional expression. The Sanskrit word guha generally designates a cave, but it is used also of the internal cavity ofthe heart, and consequently of the heart itself. This 'cave of the heart' is the vital centre in which resides not only jivatma but also unconditioned Atma, which in reality is identical with Brahma itself, as we have explained elsewhere.[1] The word guha is derived from the root guh, meaning 'to cover' or 'conceal' or 'hide', as does another similar root, gup, whence gupta which applies to everything of a secret character, everything that is not externally manifested. This is the equivalent of the Greek kruptos that gives the word 'crypt', which is synonymous with cave. These ideas are related to the centre insofar as it is considered as the most inward and consequently the most hidden point. At the same time, they refer also to the initiatic secret, either in itself or insofar as it is symbolised by the disposition of the place where the initiation is accomplished, a hidden or 'covered' place,[2] inaccessible to the profane, whether the access to it be barred by a 'labyrinthine' structure or in any other way (as for example, the 'temples without doors' of Far Eastern initiation), and always regarded as an image of the centre.

On the other hand, it is to be noted that this hiddenness or secrecy which

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1 Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta, ch. 3 (see Chandogya Upanishad, III,: 14, 3 and VIII 1, I.)

2 Cf., the Masonic expression, étre à couvert, to be under cover, to be safe.

characterises spiritual centres or their figurative representation implies that the traditional truth itself is no longer accessible in all its fullness to all men equally, which is the sign of a period of 'obscuration', at least in a relative sense. This makes it possible to 'place' such a symbolism in the course of the march of the cyclic process; but that is a point to which we shall have to come back to more fully in studying the relationships between the mountain and the cave, insofar as both are taken as symbols of the centre. For the moment we will simply point out in this respect that the diagram of the heart is a down-pointing triangle (the 'triangle of the heart' is yet another traditional expression); and this same figure also stands for the cave, whereas the mountain, or the pyramid which is its equivalent, is figured on the contrary by an up-pointing triangle; this shows that we have here a relationship that is inverse, and also in a certain sense complementary. Let us add, on the subject of this representation of the heart and the cave by an inverted triangle, that here is one of those cases in which clearly no idea of 'black magic' is involved, despite the all too frequent assertions of those whose knowledge of symbolism. is totally insufficient.

Let us now return to what is hidden, according to the Hindu tradition, in the 'cave of the heart'[3]: it is the principle of the being, which, in this state of envelopment and with regard to manifestation, is compared to what is smallest (the word dahara, which denotes the cavity where it resides, also refers to this same notion of smallness), while in reality it is what is greatest, just as the point is spatially infinitesimal and even null, although it is the principle by which all space is produced, or again, just as the number one appears as the smallest of numbers, although it contains them all principially, and produces from itself all their unending series. So here again we find the expression of an inverse relationship, inasmuch as the principle is considered according to two different points of view; of these, the point of view of extreme smallness concerns the principle's hidden and as it were 'invisible' state which, for the being in question, is as yet only a 'virtuality', but which will be the starting point of its spiritual development; there indeed lies the beginning (initium) of this development, which is directly related to

3 Katha Upanishad 1: 14.

initiation in the etymological sense of this term; and it is precisely from this point of view that the cave can be considered as the place of the 'second birth'. In this respect, we find texts such as the following: 'Know that this Agni, who is the foundation of the eternal (principial) world, and through whom that world can be attained, is hidden in the cave (of the heart)',> which in the microcosmic order refers to the 'second birth'; and also, by transposition into the macrocosmic order, it refers to its analogue, which is the birth of the Avatara.

It has already been mentioned that what resides in the heart is both jivatma from the standpoint of individual manifestation, and unconditioned Atma or Paramatma from the principial point of view; the distinction between individual and principle is no more than an illusory one; it only exists with regard to manifestation, but they are one in absolute reality. These are the 'two who have entered into the cave' and who at the same time are also said to 'dwell on the highest summit', so that the two symbolisms of the cave and the mountain are here reunited.[4] The text adds that 'those who know Brahma call them darkness and light'; this refers especially to the symbolism of 'Nara-narayana of which we have spoken in connection with the Atma-Gita, quoting this very same text: Nara, the human or mortal who is Jivatma, is identified with Arjuna; and Narayana, the divine or the immortal, which is Paramatma, is identifled with Krishna. Now, according to their literal meanings, the name Krishna denotes darkness of hue and that of Arjuna lightness, or, respectively, night and day, inasmuch as they are considered as representing the unmanifested and the manifested.[5] An exactly similar symbolism in this respect is that of the Dioscuri in their relationship with the two hemispheres, one dark and the other light, as we have indicated in connection with the meaning of the 'double spiral'[6] On the other hand, these 'two' that is, jivatma and Paramatma, are also the 'two birds' which appear in other texts as 'abiding on the same tree" (just as Arjuna and Krishna are mounted in the same chariot), and who

4 Katha Upanishad III, 1; cf Brahma Sütras 1: 2, 11-12.

5 Cf., A. K. Coomaraswamy, "The Darker Side of the Dawn' [Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 94, 1] and 'Angel and Titan, an Essay in Vedic Ontology' [Journal of the American Oriental Society, 55, 373-419].

6 The Great Triad, Ch. 5.

are said to be ‘inseparably united’ because, as we said above, they are really one, the distinction between them being no more than illusory.[7] It must be noted here that the symbolism of the tree is essentially ‘axial’, like that of the mountain; and the cave, inasmuch as it is considered as situated under the mountain or within it, is also on the axis, where in any case, whatever the point of view, the centre must always be, for it is in the centre that the individual is united with the Universal.

Before leaving this subject, there is a point of language to be considered, the importance of which should not be overestimated, but which is curious nevertheless. The Egyptian word hor, which is the name of Horus, seems to mean heart. Horus would thus be the ‘Heart of the World’, according to a designation that is to be found in most traditions and which is in perfect keeping with his symbolism as a whole, insofar as that can be determined. It might be tempting, at first sight, to connect this word hor with cor, the Latin name for heart, the more so in that in the different languages the similar roots which denote the heart are to be found with either the aspirate or the guttural as initial letter: thus, on the one hand, hrid or hridaya in Sanskrit, heart in English, herz in German, and on the other, ker or kardion in Greek, and cor itself (genitive cordis) in Latin. But the common root of all these words, including the last mentioned, is in reality HRD or KRD, which can scarcely be the case with the word hor, so that here it would be not a question of the same root but only of a sort of phonetic convergence, which is none the less striking. There is however something that is perhaps more remarkable and in any case directly related to our subject: in Hebrew, the word hor or hur, written with the letter heth, signifies cave; this does not necessarily mean that there is an etymological link between these Hebrew and Egyptian words, although strictly speaking they may have a more or less remote common origin, but however that may be, their resemblance is none the less of considerable interest, seeing that there can be no such thing as pure chance. Nor is this all: in Hebrew, hor or har, written this time with the letter hz, signifles mountain; now since heth is, among aspirates, a reinforcement or hardening of he, as it were a compression, and since heth moreover expresses in itself,

7 Mundaka Upanishad III:1: Svetasvatara Upanishad IV, 6

ideographically, a notion of limit or enclosure, we see that the very relationship between the two words denotes the cave as being the place enclosed within the mountain, as indeed it is, literally as well as symbolically; and this brings us back yet again to the relationships between the mountain and the cave, which we must examine now in more detail.

January 1938

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE CAVE

There therefore exists a close relationship between the mountain and the cave, insofar as both are taken as symbols of spiritual centers, just as, moreover, for obvious reasons, all “axial” or “polar” symbols are as well, of which the mountain is precisely one of the principal ones. We recall that, in this respect, the cave must be regarded as situated beneath the mountain or within it, so as likewise to be found in the axis, which further reinforces the link existing between these two symbols, which are in a certain way complementary to one another. It must nevertheless also be remarked, in order to “situate” them exactly in relation to one another, that the mountain has a more “primordial” character than the cave: this results from the fact that it is visible externally, that it is even, one might say, what is most visible from all sides, whereas the cave is on the contrary, as we have said, a place essentially hidden and closed.

One can easily deduce from this that the representation of the spiritual center by the mountain properly corresponds to the original period of terrestrial humanity, during which truth was integrally accessible to all (hence the name Satya-Yuga, and the summit of the mountain is then Satya-Loka or the “place of truth”); but when, as a result of the downward course of the cycle, this same truth was no longer within reach except of a more or less restricted “elite” (which coincides with the beginning of initiation understood in its strictest sense) and became hidden from the majority of men, the cave was a more appropriate symbol for the spiritual center and, consequently, for the initiatic sanctuaries which are images of it.

By such a change, the center, one might say, did not abandon the mountain, but only withdrew from its summit to its interior; on the other hand, this same change is in a certain way a “reversal,” by which, as we

have explained elsewhere, the "celestial world" (to which the elevation of the mountain above the terrestrial surface refers) has become in a certain sense the "subterranean world" (although in reality it is not this world that has changed, but the conditions of the external world, and consequently its relation with it); and this "reversal" is figured by the respective diagrams of the mountain and the cave, which at the same time express their complementarity.

As we have said previously, the diagram of the mountain, as well as of the pyramid and the mound which are its equivalents, is a triangle whose apex is directed upward; that of the cave, on the contrary, is a triangle whose apex is directed downward, therefore inverted in relation to the former. This inverted triangle is also the diagram of the heart[1], and of the cup which is generally assimilated to it in symbolism, as we have shown notably with regard to the Holy Grail[2]. Let us add that these latter symbols and those similar to them, from a more general point of view, refer to the passive or feminine principle of universal manifestation, or to one of its aspects[3], whereas those which are schematized by the upright triangle relate to the active or masculine principle; there is therefore indeed here a true complementarity.

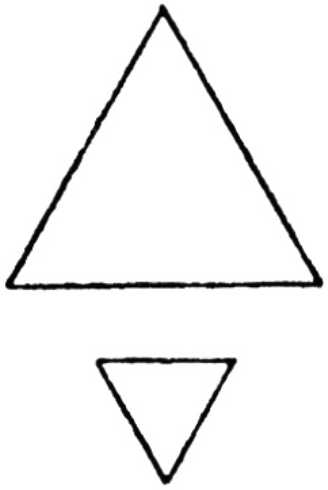

Fig. 12

Moreover, if one places the two triangles one beneath the other, which corresponds to the situation of the cave beneath the mountain, one sees that the second can be considered as the reflection of the first (fig. 12); and this idea of reflection suits well the relation of a derived symbol to a primordial symbol, according to what we said earlier concerning the

1 This figuration can be related to the fact that the Arabic for heart (qulb) literally signifies that it is in an 'inverted' position (maqlub)

2 In ancient Egypt, the vase was the hieroglyph of the heart. The 'cup' of the Tarot also corresponds to the 'heart' of ordinary playing cards.

3 In India, the inverted triangle is one of the chief symbols of the Shakti; it is also that of the primordial Waters.

relationship of the mountain and the cave insofar as they are successive representations of the spiritual center in the different phases of cyclical development.

One might be surprised that we depict the inverted triangle here as smaller than the upright triangle, for, since it is its reflection, it would seem that it should be equal to it; but such a difference in proportions is not an exceptional thing in symbolism: thus, in Hebrew Kabbalah, the "Macroprosopon" or "Great Countenance" has as its reflection the "Microprosopon" or "Small Countenance." Moreover, in the present case there is a more particular reason for this: we recalled, with regard to the relationship of the cave and the heart, the text of the Upanishads in which it is said that the Principle, which resides at the "center of the being," is "smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, smaller than a grain of mustard, smaller than a grain of millet, smaller than the germ that is in a grain of millet," but also, at the same time, "greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere (or the intermediate world), greater than the sky, greater than all these worlds together[4]"; now, in the inverse relationship of the two symbols that we are presently considering, it is the mountain which corresponds here to the idea of "greatness," and the cave (or the cavity of the heart) to that of "smallness."

The aspect of "greatness" moreover refers to absolute reality, and that of "smallness" to appearances relative to manifestation; it is therefore perfectly normal that the former should be represented here by the symbol which corresponds to a "primordial" condition[5], and the latter by that which corresponds to a later condition of spiritual "obscuration" and "envelopment."

If one wishes to represent the cave as situated within the very interior (or at the heart, one might say) of the mountain, it suffices to transfer the inverted triangle to the interior of the upright triangle, in such a way that their centers coincide (fig. 13); it must then necessarily be smaller

4 Chandogya Upanishad III, 14. 3.

5 It is known that Dante located the Earthly Paradise at the summit of a mountain, which confirms this situation as that of the spiritual centre in the 'primordial state' of humanity.

in order to be entirely contained within it, but apart from this difference, the ensemble of the figure thus obtained is manifestly identical to the symbol of the "Seal of Solomon," where the two opposed triangles likewise represent two complementary principles, in the various applications of which they are susceptible.

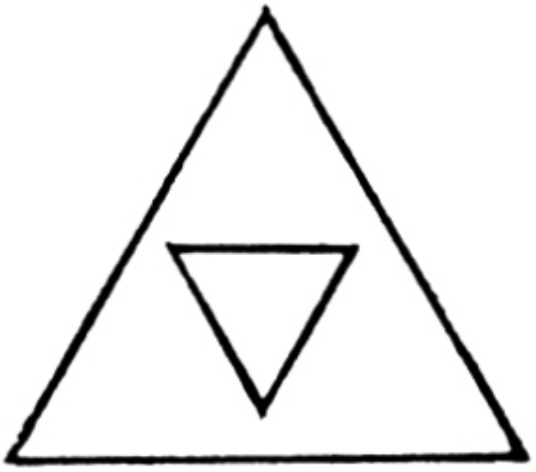

Fig. 13

On the other hand, if one makes the sides of the inverted triangle equal to half those of the upright triangle (we have made them somewhat smaller so that the two triangles may appear entirely detached from one another, but in fact it is evident that the entrance of the cave must be found at the very surface of the mountain, therefore that the triangle which represents it should really touch the contour of the other)[6], the small triangle will divide the surface of the large one into four equal parts, of which one will be the inverted triangle itself, while the three others will be upright triangles; this last consideration, as well as that of certain numerical relations connected with it, does not, to tell the truth, have a direct relation with our present subject, but we shall doubtless have occasion to encounter it again subsequently in the course of other studies.

6 It will be noted, according to the same diagram, that if the mountain is replaced by the pyramid, the pyramid's inner chamber is the exact equivalent of the cave.

THE ERROR OF "PSYCHOLOGISM"

We have very often already had occasion to point out the various distortions, whether conscious or unconscious, to which Westerners subject the Eastern doctrines that they claim to study: unconsciously, when it is only a matter of a wholly involuntary misunderstanding, due simply to the influence of certain preconceived ideas from which they are incapable of freeing themselves; consciously, at least to some degree, when there is added to this the will either to depreciate these doctrines or to make use of them for some kind of propaganda.

In this latter case there falls in particular the attempt made, for some years now, to transform the doctrines in question into "mysticism," and more especially their aspects of an esoteric or initiatic order, although, naturally, all those who accept this interpretation do not realize the purposes to which it actually corresponds. In these very recent times, we have noticed the growing diffusion of yet another interpretation, which, to tell the truth, seems to us rather to fall into the category of unconscious deformations, but which is for all that no less erroneous nor perhaps less dangerous, and which even presents singularly disquieting aspects: we wish to speak of interpretation in "psychological" terms, especially when it is conceived in accordance with the theories of the most recent schools, for then it is no longer merely a matter of a manifest insufficiency, but indeed of a veritable "subversion."

Certainly, what we may call "psychologism," that is to say, the tendency systematically to reduce everything to explanations of a psychological order, is not something entirely new in the Western world; it is, at bottom, only a simple particular case of "humanism," understood, according to the proper sense of the word, as the reduction of all things to purely human elements. Moreover, this "psychologism" implies a very restricted conception of the human individual himself and of his possibilities, for "classical" psychology confines itself to envisaging only some of the most external and most superficial manifestations of

the “mental,” those which are in a more or less direct relation with the corporeal modality of the individual.

This is, let us say in passing, the reason why we always make a distinction between the two terms “psychological” and “psychic,” reserving for the latter its etymological acceptation, incomparably more extensive, since it can include all the subtle elements of individuality, whereas there is only a truly infinitesimal portion of these that falls within the “psychological” domain. Under these conditions, there is no reason to be surprised at the truly childish character that most often attaches to explanations drawn from psychology and claiming to apply to things that in no way fall within its competence, such as religion, for example; this is not to say, moreover, that they are ever entirely harmless, for they have in any case their place among the efforts made by the anti-traditional spirit to destroy the notion of all supra-human reality.

But today there is something else still to be considered: the situation is no longer simply such as we have just indicated, but has noticeably worsened as a result of the invasion of the “subconscious” into psychology, which, extending its domain in a certain sense, but solely from below, risks mixing into everything it touches the worst manifestations of the most inferior psychism.

In this regard, we shall make a remark of a more general scope: ill-advised “traditionalists” rejoice inconsiderately at seeing modern science, in its different branches, emerge from the narrow limits within which its conceptions had hitherto confined themselves, and adopt an attitude less grossly “materialistic” than that which it had in the last century; they even readily imagine that, in a certain way, profane science will thus end by rejoining traditional science, which, for reasons of principle, is something entirely impossible.

What they do not realize is that in reality this is a new stage in the perfectly logical development of the plan according to which the progressive deviation of the modern world is being accomplished;

materialism has played its role there, but now the pure and simple negation that it represents has become insufficient; it has served effectively to bar man's access to possibilities of a higher order, but it cannot unleash the inferior forces which alone can bring the work of disorder and dissolution to its final point.

The materialistic attitude, by its very limitation, still presents only a danger that is itself limited; its "thickness," if one may so speak, shelters the one who adheres to it from certain subtle influences, and gives him in this respect a kind of immunity quite comparable to that of the mollusk which remains strictly enclosed within its shell; but if one makes in this shell, which here represents the ensemble of conventionally accepted scientific conceptions, an opening from below, as we were saying a moment ago with regard to the new tendencies of psychology, these destructive influences will penetrate there immediately, and all the more easily in that, as a result of the negative work accomplished in the preceding phase, no element of a higher order will be able to intervene to oppose their action.

One could further say that the period of materialism constitutes only a kind of theoretical preparation, whereas that of inferior psychism which succeeds it involves a "pseudo-realization," directed in the reverse sense of a true spiritual realization, and thus imitating, insofar as the condition of the profane world as such permits it, the properly "infernal" realization which is that of the "counter-initiation," and thus being for it roughly what the exoteric part of a tradition is in relation to its esoteric part.

One could also conclude from this, among other things, that the "counter-initiation," after having prepared the world by inculcating in it through suggestion all the false or illusory ideas that form the specifically modern mentality, considers the moment to have come to call it to a more direct, if not more conscious, "participation," and thus to constitute a complete "counter-tradition," for which it would itself be what initiation is for every true tradition—except, of course, that spirituality is here totally lacking; and one may indeed say that, in this

respect also, the devil truly appears as the “ape of God.”

It goes without saying, moreover, that the two phases of which we have just spoken are not always rigorously separated in fact, and that one can currently observe their coexistence in many cases; it would indeed be greatly exaggerated to claim that materialistic science has entirely disappeared, and, at the very least, it will doubtless be able to survive for a long time yet in textbooks and popular works.

This is notably the case in psychology, from which these considerations have taken us much less far than one might believe, for it is precisely there that they find one of their clearest and most striking applications; a certain “laboratory psychology,” the culmination of the process of limitation and materialization in which the “philosophico-literary” psychology of university teaching represented only a less advanced stage, and which is no longer really anything but a sort of accessory branch of physiology, still coexists with the new theories and methods, the most “representative” of which, from the point of view where we place ourselves, are those known under the general designation of “psychoanalysis.”

We shall even add that a “psychoanalyst” may very well still be a materialist, by the effect of his previous education and by the ignorance in which he remains of the true nature of the elements that he studies or brings into play; is not one of the most singular characteristics of modern science that it never knows exactly what it is really dealing with?

There is certainly much more than a simple question of vocabulary in the very significant fact, in itself, that present-day psychology never envisages anything but the “subconscious,” and not the “superconscious,” which should logically be its correlative; this is indeed, beyond any doubt, even if those who employ such terminology do not realize it, the expression of an extension that operates solely downward.

Some even adopt, as a synonym or equivalent of “subconscious,” the term “unconscious,” which, taken literally, would seem to refer to an even lower level, but which, in truth, corresponds less exactly to reality; if what is in question were truly unconscious, we do not even see very well how it would be possible to speak of it, and especially in psychological terms.

Be that as it may, what is still worthy of remark is the strange illusion by virtue of which psychologists come to consider states as all the more “profound” insofar as they are simply more inferior; is there not already there, as it were, an indication of the tendency to go against spirituality, which alone can be said to be truly “profound,” since it alone touches the very principle and center of the being?

Let us also remark that, by the appeal to the “subconscious,” psychology tends more and more to rejoin “metapsychics,” in which, by a coincidence at least strange, certain “traditionalists” today place hopes as unjustified as those inspired in them by the new orientation of ordinary science; and, to the same extent, it inevitably draws nearer to spiritism and to other more or less similar things, all of which ultimately rely on the same obscure elements of inferior psychism.

If these things, whose origin and character are more than suspect, thus appear as “precursory” movements of recent psychology, and if the latter comes, even by a roundabout path, to introduce the elements in question into the current domain of what is accepted as “official” science, it is very difficult to think that the true role of this psychology, in the present state of the world, could be other than that which we indicated previously.

The domain of psychology not having extended upward, the “superconscious,” as we were saying a moment ago, remains just as completely foreign and closed to it as ever; and when it happens to encounter something that relates to it, instead of recognizing its ignorance in this regard, it claims to annex it purely and simply by assimilating it to the “subconscious.”

We find here again that confusion of the psychic and the spiritual to which we have already drawn attention, aggravated further by the fact that it is with what is lowest in the psychic domain that it occurs; it is in this that the “subversion” to which we alluded at the beginning resides, and it is this that takes place notably, as we shall explain still more completely later on, in the case of the psychological interpretation of Eastern doctrines.

(To be continued.)

February 1938

THE ERROR OF "PSYCHOLOGISM"

(continued)[1]

We have pointed out the deformities, even more gross than the previous ones on other occasions, those that occur in the West, for example that which wants to see in the methods of Yoga a sort of "physical culture" or a therapeutics of a simply physiological order, are, by their very grossness, less dangerous than those which present themselves under more subtle aspects.

The reason is not only that the latter risk seducing minds upon which the others could not have any hold; this reason certainly exists, but there is another, of a much more general scope, which is the very one for which materialist conceptions, as we have explained, are less dangerous than those which appeal to inferior psychism. Now it is incontestable that among the deformations in which the lowest psychism intervenes, those must be classified which pretend to establish a comparison and even a more or less complete assimilation between the same methods of Yoga and the most recent techniques of Western psychology, by which we mean those that belong to the various varieties of "psychoanalysis."

Of course, the purely spiritual goal, which alone essentially constitutes Yoga as such, and without which even the use of that word is only a true derision, is no less totally misunderstood in this latter case than in the one where it is only a question of "physical culture": Yoga is neither a psychical therapeutics nor is it a bodily therapeutics; its procedures are in no way whatever a treatment for any sort of unbalanced people; quite the contrary, they address exclusively beings who, in order to be able to realize the spiritual development which is its only reason for being,

must already, by virtue of their mere natural dispositions, be as perfectly balanced as possible; there are conditions which, as one will understand without difficulty, strictly fall within the question of initiatory qualifications. It is hardly necessary to add that it is not a question any more of "pedagogical" exercises: profane education certainly has nothing to do with initiation, nor with spirituality which it would rather suppress; and we shall only remark, on this point, the astonishing misunderstanding that consists in taking for a "science of life" what is intended precisely only to enable the being to surpass life, as well as all other limitations of conditioned existence. These considerations are amply sufficient to show how erroneous is the pretension of "psychologism" to annex certain Oriental doctrines and their proper methods of "realization"; but this is still only what we could call its childish side, of a naivety that sometimes goes as far as foolishness, yet incomparably less grave than the truly "satanic" side to which we are now going to return in a more precise way.

This "satanic" character shows itself with very particular clarity in psychoanalytic interpretations of symbolism, or of what is given as such rightly or wrongly; we make this restriction because, on this point as on so many others, if one wanted to go into detail, there would be many distinctions to make and many confusions to dissipate: thus, to take only one typical example, a dream in which some "supra-human" inspiration is expressed is truly symbolic, whereas an ordinary dream is in no way so, whatever the external appearances may be. It goes without saying that psychologists of earlier schools had already often attempted, themselves too, to explain symbolism in their own way and reduce it to the measure of their own conceptions; in such a case, if it is really a question of symbolism, these explanations by purely human elements misunderstand what constitutes its whole essence; if, on the contrary, it is really only a question of human things, it is no longer anything but a false symbolism, but the very fact of designating it by that name still involves the same error on the nature of genuine symbolism.

This applies equally to the considerations engaged in by psychoanalysts, but with this difference that then it is no longer a question only of the

human, but also, to a very large extent, of the “infra-human”; one therefore has to deal this time not with a simple lowering, but with a total subversion; and every subversion, even if it is not immediately due, at least, to misunderstanding and ignorance, is always, in itself, properly “satanic.” Moreover, the character generally ignoble and repugnant of psychoanalytic interpretations constitutes, in this respect, a “mark” that cannot deceive; and what is even particularly significant from the point of view where we place ourselves is that, as we have shown in one of our works, this same “mark” is found precisely also in certain spiritist manifestations; it would certainly take a great deal of good will to see there nothing more than a simple “coincidence.” The psychoanalysts can naturally, in most cases, be just as unconscious as spiritists of what is really under all that; but both appear rather as equally “led” by a subversive will using means of the same order, if not exactly identical, a will which, whoever the beings it is incarnated in, is certainly well conscious at least in them, and corresponds to intentions undoubtedly very different from all that those who are only the unconscious instruments by which its action is exerted can imagine.

In these conditions, it is too evident that the principal use of psychoanalysis, which is its therapeutic application, can only be extremely dangerous for those who submit to it, and even for those who practice it, for these are things that one never handles with impunity; it would not be exaggerated to see in it one of the means put into operation to increase as much as possible the imbalance of the modern world, and of which another example is provided to us by the similar use of “dowsing,” for there again it is psychical elements of the same quality that come into play. Those who practice these methods are, we doubt not, firmly persuaded on the contrary of the beneficence of their results; but it is precisely thanks to this illusion that their diffusion is made possible, and this is where one can see the whole difference that exists between the intentions of these “practitioners” and the will that is at work of which they are only collaborators and tools. In reality, psychoanalysis can only have the effect of bringing to the surface, by making it clearly conscious, all the content of those “underworlds” of the being that form what is called the “subconscious”; this being,

moreover, is already psychically weak by hypothesis, for, if it were otherwise, it would not at all feel the need of resorting to a treatment of this sort; it is all the less capable of resisting this "submersion," and it risks strongly sinking irretrievably into this chaos of reckless unleashed dark forces; if, however, it nevertheless manages to escape from it, it will at least retain, throughout its life, an imprint that will be in it like an ineffaceable "stain."

We know well what some may object to this by invoking a similarity with the "descent into Hell," such as is encountered in the preliminary phases of the initiatic process; but such an assimilation is completely false, for the goal has nothing in common, no more, moreover, than the conditions of the "subject" in the two cases; one could only speak of a kind of profane parody, and this in itself gives to what is at stake a character of quite worrying "counterfeit." The truth is that this supposed "descent into Hell," which is not followed by any "ascent," is quite simply a "fall into the quagmire," according to the symbolism used in certain ancient mysteries; it is known that this "quagmire" notably had its representation on the road that led to Eleusis, and that those who fell there were profanes who claimed initiation without being qualified to receive it, and who were therefore victims only of their own imprudence. We shall add only that there do indeed exist such "quagmires" in both the macrocosmic order and the microcosmic order; this is directly connected with the question of the "external darkness," to which we made allusion recently; and one could recall, in this regard, certain evangelical texts whose sense accords exactly with what we have just indicated. In the "descent into Hell," the being definitively exhausts certain inferior possibilities in order to be able to rise afterward to higher states; in the "fall into the quagmire," the inferior possibilities seize him, dominate him and end up entirely submerging him.

We have just spoken of "counterfeit"; this impression is reinforced by other observations, such as that of the denaturation of symbolism that we pointed out above, a denaturation that tends, moreover, to extend to everything that essentially bears supra-human elements, as the attitude taken with regard to metaphysical and initiatic doctrines such as Yoga

shows, which precisely brought us to develop the present considerations. It is not all, and there is even something else which, in this regard, is perhaps even more worthy of remark: it is the necessity imposed upon anyone who wants to practice psychoanalysis professionally to be "psychoanalyzed" himself beforehand. This implies above all the recognition of the fact that the being who has undergone this operation is never again the same as before, or that, as we were saying a moment ago, it leaves him with an ineffaceable imprint, like initiation, but, in a way, in the reverse sense, since, instead of a spiritual development, it is a development of the inferior psychism that is at stake here. On the other hand, there is here a manifest imitation of initiatory transmission; but, given the difference in nature of the influences that intervene, and knowing that however there is an effective result which does not allow one to consider the matter as reducible to a simple simulacrum without any scope, this psychical transmission would be much rather comparable, in reality, to that which is practiced in a domain such as magic, not to say more precisely witchcraft. There is moreover a very obscure point concerning the very origin of this transmission: the invention of psychoanalysis is a very recent thing; whence do the first psychoanalysts obtain the "powers" that they communicate to their disciples, and by whom themselves were they "psychoanalyzed" in the first place? This question, which is nonetheless logical to ask, is probably very indiscreet, and it is more than doubtful that a satisfactory answer will ever be given to it; but there is no longer any need to recognize, in such a psychical transmission, another "mark," truly sinister by the associations to which it gives rise: psychoanalysis presents, by this side, a rather terrifying resemblance to certain "sacraments of the devil."

THE HEART AND THE WORLD EGG

After all the considerations that we have already set forth in our previous articles on the various aspects of the symbolism of the cave, there remains for us still to deal with another important point: namely, the relationships of this same symbol with that of the World Egg; but, in order that this may be properly understood and more directly connected with what we have said up to this point, we must first of all speak of the symbolic relationships of the heart with the World Egg.

One might perhaps be surprised at this at first sight and discern nothing other than a certain similarity of form between the heart and the egg; but this similarity itself can have true significance only if there exist more profound relationships; now the fact that the omphalos and the betyl, which are incontestably symbols of the center, are often of ovoid form, as was notably the omphalos of Delphi[1], clearly shows that this must indeed be the case, and this is what we must now explain.

In this regard, what it is important to remark before all else is that the World Egg is the figure, not of the "cosmos" in its state of full manifestation, but of that from which its development will be effected; and if this development is represented as an expansion accomplished in all directions starting from its point of departure, it is evident that this point of departure will necessarily coincide with the very center; thus the World Egg is therefore indeed "central" in relation to the "cosmos"[2].

The biblical figure of the terrestrial Paradise, which is also the "Center of the World," is that of a circular enclosure, which may be regarded as the horizontal section of an ovoid form just as well as of a spherical one; let us add that, in fact, the difference between these two forms consists

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1 We have examined these symbols more particularly in Le Roi du Monde; we have also indicated there that, in other cases, they assume the conical form, which is in direct relation with the symbol of the mountain, so that one finds again here the two complementary figurations of which we have spoken recently.

2 The symbol of the fruit also has the same meaning, in this connection, as that of the egg. We will no doubt return to this point in the continuation of these studies; and we will note even now that this symbol has, in addition, an obvious link with that of the garden, and therefore with the Earthly Paradise.

essentially in the fact that that of the sphere, extending equally in all directions from its center, is truly the primordial form, whereas that of the egg corresponds to an already differentiated state, deriving from the former by a sort of "polarization" or doubling of the center[3].

This "polarization" may moreover be considered as being effected as soon as the sphere accomplishes a movement of rotation around a determined axis, since, from that moment on, all the directions of space no longer play uniformly the same role; and this marks precisely the passage from one to the other of these two successive phases of the cosmogonic process, which are symbolized respectively by the sphere and by the egg[4].

That being said, there remains in sum only to show that what is contained in the World Egg is truly identical to what, as we have said previously, is also symbolically contained in the heart, and in the cave insofar as the latter is its equivalent. What is at issue here is this spiritual "germ" which, in the macrocosmic order, is designated in the Hindu tradition as Hiraṇyagarbha, that is to say literally the "golden embryo"[5]; now this "germ" is indeed truly the primordial Avatara[6], and we have seen that the place of the birth of the Avatara, just as of that which corresponds to it from the microcosmic point of view, is precisely represented by the heart or the cave.

One might perhaps object that, in the text that we cited at that time[7], as moreover in many other cases, the Avatara is expressly designated as Agni, whereas it is said that it is Brahmā who envelops himself in the World Egg, called for this reason Brahmāṇḍa, in order to be born

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3 It is thus that, in plane geometry, the unique center of the circle, by doubling itself, gives birth to the two foci of an ellipse; this same doubling is also figured very clearly in the Far-Eastern symbol of Yin–Yang, which is not without relation either with that of the World Egg.

4 Let us further note, with regard to the spherical form, that, in Islamic tradition, the sphere of primordial pure light is the Rūḥ Muḥammadiyya, which is also the "Heart of the World"; and the entire "cosmos" is vivified by the "pulsations" of this sphere, which is properly the barzakh par excellence (see on this subject the article by T. Burckhardt in the December 1937 issue).

5 See Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta, ch. 13.

6 The designation of Christ as seed in various Scriptural texts relates to this, and perhaps we will speak again of this on another occasion

7 Katha Upanishad 1: 14.

there as Hiraṇyagarbha; but, apart from the fact that the different names designate in reality only various divine attributes, which are always necessarily in connection with one another and not separate entities, it must be remarked more particularly here that, gold being considered as the "mineral light" and the "sun of metals," the very designation of Hiraṇyagarbha effectively characterizes it as a principle of an igneous nature; and this reason is added moreover to the central position in order to assimilate it symbolically to the Sun, which, besides, is also in all traditions one of the figures of the "Heart of the World."

In order to pass from there to the microcosmic application, it suffices to recall the analogy that exists between the piṇḍa, the subtle embryo of the individual being, and the Brahmāṇḍa or the World Egg[8]; and this piṇḍa, insofar as it is the permanent and indestructible "germ" of the being, is identified moreover with the "nucleus of immortality," which is called luz in the Hebrew tradition[9].

It is true that, in general, the luz is not indicated as situated in the heart, or at least that this is only one of the different localizations of which it is susceptible in its correspondence with the corporeal organism, and that it is not that which relates to the most usual case; but it is nonetheless exactly, among the others, where it must be according to all that has already been said, that is to say, where the luz is in immediate relation with the "second birth."

In fact, these localizations, which are also in relation with the Hindu doctrine of the chakras, refer to as many conditions of the human being or phases of his spiritual development: at the base of the vertebral column, it is the state of "sleep" in which the luz is found in the ordinary man[10]; in the heart, it is the initial phase of its "germination," which

8 Yatha pinda tathà Brahmānda (see Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta, ch. 13 and 19).

9 For further developments on this point see again The Lord of the World. It may be noted also that the assimilation of the 'second birth' to a 'germination' of the luz clearly recalls the Taoist description of the initiatic process as 'endogeny of the immortal'.

10 The serpent coiled around the World Egg, and sometimes figured around the omphalos and the betyl, is, in this regard, Kuṇḍalinī coiled around the nucleus of immortality, which is also in relation with the symbolism of the "philosophers' stone"; to this "inferior" position of the luz, direct allusion was made in the Hermetic formula Visita interiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultum lapidem; the "rectification" is here the "straightening" which marks, after the descent, the beginning of the ascending movement, corresponding

is properly the “second birth”; at the frontal eye, it is the perfection of the human state, that is to say reintegration into the “primordial state”; finally, at the crown of the head, it is the passage to the supra-individual states; and we shall again find the exact correspondence of these various stages when we return, in a forthcoming article, to the symbolism of the initiatic cave[11].

to the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī, and the complement of the same formula designates moreover this “hidden stone” as veram medicinam, which also identifies it with amṛta, the nourishment or drink of immortality.

11 Let us note again that the designation of the “golden embryo” suggests a certain relationship with alchemical symbolism, which is moreover confirmed by parallels such as those we have indicated in the preceding note; and we shall also see, in this regard, that the initiatic cave corresponds in a remarkable way to the Hermetic athanor; there is no reason to be surprised at these similarities, for the process of the Great Work, understood in its true sense, is in the end nothing other than the very process of initiation.

March 1938

THE ILLUSION OF “ORDINARY LIFE”

What may be called the profane point of view is, as we have often said, nothing other than the product of a veritable spiritual degeneration, since it could not exist in an integrally traditional civilization, where all things, whatever domain they may belong to, necessarily participate in the sacred character that is that of tradition itself, the traditional civilization being at the same time that which one may rightly regard as normal. There is therefore something, in sum, abnormal in the point of view that consists, even where certain traditional elements still subsist, in setting them aside in a manner altogether separate, in assigning them a place as restricted as possible, in such a way that they no longer exercise any influence over the rest of human activity, which will henceforth be regarded as constituting a profane domain, although, in reality, such a domain can have no legitimate existence; and this supposed profane domain moreover becoming more and more invasive, this is, in the final analysis, nothing other than a movement toward the complete negation of all tradition, such as one can observe in the modern Western world.

From this profane point of view was born the idea of what is commonly designated as “ordinary life” or “everyday life”; what is meant by this, in fact, is well, before anything else, that in which, by the exclusion of the sacred, ritual, or symbolic (whether this be envisaged in the specifically religious sense or according to any other traditional modality), all that is supra-human is relegated to an “extraordinary” domain, considered as exceptional, strange, and even disquieting; there is therefore there, properly speaking, a reversal of the normal order, which can only lead to ignorance or to the negation of the supra-human. Some even go so far as to employ, in the same sense, the expression

“real life,” which, at bottom, is of a singular irony, for the truth is that what they so name is on the contrary the worst of illusions; we do not mean by that that the things in question are in themselves devoid of all reality, although this reality, which is in sum that of the sensible order itself, is at the lowest degree of all; but it is the way in which they are envisaged that is entirely false, which, by separating them from every superior principle, precisely denies them that which constitutes all their reality.

One sees from this how, in this conception of “ordinary life,” one passes almost imperceptibly from one stage to another, degeneration becoming progressively accentuated: one begins by admitting that certain things may be withdrawn from all traditional influence, then it is these things that come to be considered as normal; from there, one easily arrives at regarding them as the only “real” ones, which amounts to rejecting as “unreal” everything supra-human; and even, the human domain itself being conceived in an increasingly narrowly limited manner, one ends by reducing it to the sole corporeal modality, excluding everything that is simply of a “suprasensible” order. One need only observe how our contemporaries constantly employ, without even thinking about it, the word “real” as a synonym of “sensible,” to realize that it is indeed to this last point that they have effectively arrived.

One could also show without difficulty that modern philosophy, which is in sum only a “systematized” expression of the general mentality, has followed a parallel course: it began with the Cartesian praise of “common sense,” which is very characteristic in this respect, for “ordinary life” is assuredly, par excellence, the domain of this so-called “common sense,” as limited as it and in the same manner; then, from rationalism, which is in sum only a philosophical aspect of “humanism,” one arrives little by little at materialism or positivism: whether one expressly denies, as does the former, everything that is beyond the sensible world, or whether one contents oneself, as does the latter, with refusing to concern oneself with it by declaring it “inaccessible” or “unknowable,” the result, in fact, is exactly the same in both cases, and it is indeed that which we have just described.

It should only be added that, in most people, it is only a matter of what one may call a “practical” materialism or positivism, independent of any philosophical theory, and which may very well exist even among people who, in good faith, believe themselves to be far removed from materialism and positivism, but who, in all circumstances, nonetheless behave as their adherents; and this example clearly shows that philosophy, at bottom, has very little importance, or that at least it has importance only insofar as it may be considered as “representative” of a certain mentality, rather than as acting effectively upon it; could a philosophical conception have the least success if it did not respond to some of the predominant tendencies of the epoch in which it is formulated? We do not, moreover, wish to say that philosophers do not play, like others, their role in the modern deviation, which would be exaggerated, but only that this role is more restricted than one might be tempted to suppose, and quite different from what it may seem externally.

In a wholly general manner, what is most apparent is always, according to the very laws that govern manifestation, a consequence rather than a cause, an outcome rather than a point of departure, and, in any case, it is never there that one must seek what acts in a truly effective manner in a deeper order, whether this be an action exercised in a normal and legitimate sense, or on the contrary, as in the case of which we are presently speaking.

We do not claim to envisage here all the aspects of the question: thus, one might ask how the illusion in question is linked to another specifically modern illusion, that which pretends to reduce everything to purely quantitative elements, which properly constitutes “mechanism.” On this point, we shall only remark that this “mechanistic” conception, although it naturally also has its philosophical expression, which goes back to Cartesianism, is linked more directly to the “scientific” side of the materialist tendency (we say only tendency, because, theoretically, mechanism and materialism do not coincide exactly in all cases), and that this latter certainly has, for various reasons, much more influence

than philosophical theories on the common mentality, in which there is always at least an implicit belief in the truth of a "science" whose hypothetical character inevitably escapes it, whereas everything that presents itself as philosophy leaves it more or less indifferent; the existence of practical and utilitarian applications in one case, and their absence in the other, is perhaps not entirely foreign to this.

This brings us back precisely once again to the idea of "ordinary life," into which there effectively enters a fairly strong dose of "pragmatism": as soon as it is agreed that "reality" consists exclusively in what falls under the senses, it is entirely natural that the value of any given thing should be measured by its capacity to produce effects of a sensible order; now it is evident that "science," considered in the modern way as essentially bound up with industry, if not even more or less completely confused with it, must from this point of view occupy the first rank, and that thereby it finds itself as closely involved as possible in this "ordinary life," of which it even becomes, in a certain sense, one of the principal factors; by a rebound effect, the hypotheses on which it claims to be founded will themselves benefit from this privileged situation in the eyes of the vulgar.

That being said, one may understand that, when we speak of the materialist attitude as being that of the great majority of our contemporaries, we understand it in the most general sense of the word, and that consequently this attitude may imply, in very diverse proportions according to individuals, philosophical materialism, scientific materialism, and simply practical materialism; the first may even often be totally absent, whereas, almost always, the second exercises an influence that is felt, in a more or less conscious way, within practical materialism itself.

It goes without saying, moreover, that all this is at bottom nothing but so many diverse aspects of one and the same tendency, and also that this tendency, like all those which are, in the same way, constitutive of the modern spirit, certainly could not have developed spontaneously; we have explained ourselves often enough on this last point not to insist

upon it again, and we shall only recall what we have said recently about the more precise place occupied by materialism within the ensemble of the "plan" according to which the deviation of the modern world is effected, for this is a consideration that we shall have occasion to encounter again later.

What is truly singular, and would even be comic if it were a matter of less serious things—indeed we might say less sinister ones—is that materialism, one of whose principal pretensions is to suppress all mystery, is itself thus rendered profoundly mysterious; and what is no less so, from another point of view, is that the very notion of "matter," of which it makes its base by definition, turns out to be certainly the most enigmatic and least intelligible that can be.

Needless to say, these are things of which the materialists themselves are perfectly incapable of becoming aware, blinded as they are by their preconceived ideas; they would doubtless be just as astonished to learn that there have existed and that there still exist men for whom what they call "ordinary life" would be the most extraordinary thing imaginable, since it corresponds to nothing of what actually took place in their existence; yet this is indeed so, and what is more, it is these men who must be considered as truly "normal," whereas the materialists, with all their so-much-vaunted "common sense" and all the "progress" of which they proudly regard themselves as the most accomplished products and the most "advanced" representatives, are at bottom only beings in whom certain faculties have become atrophied to the point of being completely abolished.

It is moreover only under this condition that the sensible world can appear to them as a "closed system," within which they feel themselves in perfect security; it remains to be seen how this illusion can, in a certain sense and to a certain extent, be "realized" by materialism itself, but also how, despite this, it represents in some way only an eminently unstable state of equilibrium, and how, at the very point where we are at present, this security of "ordinary life," upon which until now the entire external organization of the modern world has rested, risks strongly

being disturbed by unexpected “interferences.”

(To be continued.)

THE CAVE AND THE WORLD EGG

The initiatic cave, as we have said previously, is an image of the world; but, on the other hand, by reason of its symbolic assimilation with the heart, it represents more particularly the central place. It may seem that there are here two different points of view, but in reality they do not contradict one another in any way, and what we have set forth concerning the World Egg suffices to reconcile them, and even to identify them in a certain sense; indeed, the World Egg is central in relation to the "cosmos," and, at the same time, it contains in germ everything that the latter will contain in the fully manifested state; all things are therefore found in the World Egg, but in a state of "envelopment," which is precisely also figured, as we have explained, by the very situation of the cave, by its character as a hidden and closed place. The two halves into which the World Egg is divided, according to one of the most usual aspects of its symbolism, become respectively heaven and earth; in the cave likewise, the ground corresponds to the earth and the vault to heaven; there is therefore in all this nothing that is not perfectly coherent and normal.

Now there still remains to consider another question that is particularly important from the initiatic point of view: we have spoken of the cave as the place of the "second birth"; but there is an essential distinction to be made between this "second birth" and the "third birth," a distinction which corresponds in sum to that of initiation into the "lesser mysteries" and into the "greater mysteries"; if the "third birth" is also represented as being accomplished in the cave, how will its symbolism be adapted to this? The "second birth," which is properly what may be called "psychic regeneration," takes place in the domain of the subtle possibilities of human individuality; the "third birth," on the contrary, being effected directly in the spiritual order and no longer in the psychic order, is access to the domain of supra-individual possibilities. The one is therefore properly a "birth in the cosmos" (to which corresponds, as we have said, in the macrocosmic order, the birth of the Avatāra), and, consequently, it is logical that it should be figured as taking place

entirely within the cave; but the other is a "birth outside the cosmos," and to this "exit from the cosmos," according to the expression of Hermes[1], there must correspond, for the symbolism to be complete, a final exit from the cave, the latter containing only the possibilities that are included in the "cosmos," possibilities which the initiate must precisely go beyond in this new phase of the development of his being, of which the "second birth" was in reality only the point of departure.

Here, certain relationships will naturally come to be modified: the cave once again becomes a "sepulchre," no longer this time exclusively by reason of its "subterranean" situation, but because the entire "cosmos" is in a certain way the "sepulchre" from which the being must now emerge; the "third birth" is necessarily preceded by the "second death," which is no longer death to the profane world, but truly "death to the cosmos" (and also "in the cosmos"), and this is why the "extra-cosmic" birth is always assimilated to a "resurrection"[2]. For this "resurrection," which is at the same time the exit from the cave, to be able to take place, it is necessary that the stone which closes the opening of the "sepulchre" (that is to say, of the cave itself) be removed; we shall see later how this may be translated, in certain cases, in ritual symbolism.

On the other hand, when what was outside the cave represented only the profane world or the "outer darkness," the cave appeared as the only illuminated place, and moreover necessarily illuminated from its very interior: no light, in fact, could then come to it from outside. Now, since account must be taken of "extra-cosmic" possibilities, the cave, despite this illumination, becomes relatively obscure, in relation, we shall not say to what is outside it without distinction, but more precisely to what is above it, beyond its vault, for it is indeed there that what represents the "extra-cosmic" domain is found. One could then consider, according to this new point of view, the interior illumination as being only the reflection of a light that penetrates through the "roof of the world," by the "solar door," which is the "eye" of the cosmic vault or the upper

1 Cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, La Vierge allaitant saint Bernard, Études Traditionnelles, December 1937, p. 415.

2 One also finds the analogue of all this in the symbolism of the chrysalis and of its transformation into a butterfly.

opening of the cave. In the microcosmic order, this opening corresponds to the Brahma-randhra, that is to say to the point of contact of individuality with the "seventh ray" of the spiritual Sun[3], a point whose "localization," according to organic correspondences, is found at the crown of the head[4], and which is also figured by the upper opening of the Hermetic athanor[5]. Let us add, in this regard, that the "philosophical egg," which manifestly plays the role of the World Egg, is enclosed within the athanor, but that the latter can itself be assimilated to the "cosmos," and this in the double macrocosmic and microcosmic application; the cave may therefore also be at once symbolically identified with the "philosophical egg" and with the athanor, according as one refers, if one wishes, to different degrees of development in the initiatic process, but in any case without its fundamental signification being in any way altered.

One may also remark that, with this illumination by reflection, one finds again the image of Plato's cave, in which one sees only shadows, by virtue of a light that comes from outside[6]; and this light is indeed "extra-cosmic," since its source is the "intelligible Sun." The liberation of the prisoners and their exit from the cave is a "coming into the light," by which they may directly contemplate the reality of which they had until then perceived only a simple reflection; this reality consists of the eternal "archetypes," the possibilities contained in the "permanent actuality" of immutable essence.

Finally, it is important to note that the two "births" of which we have spoken, being two successive phases of complete initiation, are also, by that very fact, two stages on a single path, and that this path is essentially "axial," just as, in its symbolism, is the "solar ray" to which we referred a moment ago, and which marks the spiritual "direction" that the being must follow, constantly rising, in order finally to reach his

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3 Cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, loc. cit.

4 See L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vêdânta, ch. XX.

5 The "third birth" could, by employing alchemical terminology, be regarded as a "sublimation."

6 This obscure vision is the vision quasi per speculum in aenigmate of which Saint Paul speaks (First Epistle to the Corinthians, XIII, 12); what appears as manifested in the "cosmos" is properly only a shadow or a "vertigo" of transcendent reality, but this is moreover what gives it its value as a symbol of that reality.

true center[7]. Within the limits of the microcosm, this “axial” direction is that of the suṣumṇā, which extends as far as the crown of the head, from where it is prolonged, one might say “extra-individually,” by the “solar ray” itself, traversed in ascending back toward its source; it is along the suṣumṇā that the chakras are found, which are the subtle centers of individuality, and to certain of which correspond the different positions of the luz, or “nucleus of immortality,” that we considered previously, in such a way that these very positions, or the successive “awakening” of the corresponding chakras, are always likewise assimilable to stages situated on the same “axial” path. On the other hand, the Axis of the World being naturally identified with the vertical direction, which indeed corresponds to this idea of an ascending path, the upper opening, which corresponds microcosmically to the crown of the head as we have said, should normally, in this respect, be situated at the zenith of the cave, that is to say at the very summit of the vault. However, the question in fact presents certain complications due to the fact that two different modalities of symbolism, one “polar” and the other “solar,” may intervene here; this is why it is appropriate, with regard to the exit from the cave, to provide still further clarifications which will at the same time furnish an example of the relationships that these two modalities may have with one another, whose respective predominance originally corresponds to different cyclical periods, but which, subsequently, have often become associated and combined in multiple ways.

7 Cf. aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm in the Islamic tradition.

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(continued)

In order to understand how a world corresponding to the materialist conception, at least up to a certain point, can have some effective existence in the very period in which this conception reigns, one must consider that the human order and the cosmic order are not separated, as modern people imagine all too easily, but are on the contrary closely linked, in such a way that each of them constantly reacts upon the other, and that there is always a correspondence between their respective states. This consideration is essentially implied in the entire doctrine of cycles, and without it the traditional data relating to that doctrine would be entirely unintelligible; the relationship that exists between certain critical phases of the history of humanity and certain cataclysms occurring according to determined astronomical periods is perhaps the most striking example of this, but it goes without saying that this is only an extreme case of these correspondences, which in reality exist in a continuous manner, even though they are doubtless less apparent so long as things are modified only gradually and almost imperceptibly.

That being so, we may say that, in the course of cyclical development, cosmic manifestation as a whole, and consequently with it the human mentality that is included therein, follows a "descending" course, in the sense of a gradual distancing from the Principle, thus from primordial spirituality. This course may therefore be described as a sort of progressive "materialization" of the cosmic milieu itself, and it is only when this "materialization" has reached a certain degree, already very strongly accentuated, that the materialist conception can appear

correlatively in man, as well as the general attitude that corresponds to it in practice and that conforms, as we have said, to the representation of what is called “ordinary life”; moreover, without this “materialization,” all this would not even have the least appearance of justification, for ambient reality would bring it at every instant denials that are too manifest. The very idea of “matter,” such as the moderns understand it, could truly arise only under these conditions; what it expresses is moreover only a “limit” which, in the “descent” in question, can never be reached in fact, for a world in which there would be something truly “inert” would immediately cease to exist by that very fact; this idea is therefore indeed the most illusory that could be, since it does not correspond even to the lowest degree of reality, but only to that which is, if one may express it thus, below all reality.

One could also say, in other terms, that “materialization” exists as a tendency, but that “materiality,” which would be the complete outcome of this tendency, is an unrealizable state; from this there follows, among other consequences, that the mechanical laws theoretically formulated by modern science are never susceptible of exact and rigorous application to the conditions of experience, where there always subsist elements that necessarily escape them, even in the phase in which the role of these elements is in a certain way reduced to a minimum. It is therefore never a matter of anything more than an approximation, which, in this phase, and subject to the reservation of cases that have then become exceptional, may be sufficient for immediate practical needs, but which nonetheless implies a very gross simplification, which deprives it of all value as a “science” in the true sense of that word; and it is also by virtue of this same approximation that the sensible world can take on the appearance of a “closed system,” both in the eyes of physicists and in the course of events that constitute “ordinary life.”

To arrive at this point, it is necessary that man, as a result of the “materialization” of which we have just spoken, should have lost the use of the faculties that would normally allow him to go beyond the limits of the sensible world; for, even if this world is really surrounded by thicker partitions, one might say, than it was in its earlier states, it

nonetheless remains true that there can never be anywhere an absolute separation between different orders of existence; such a separation would have the effect of cutting off from reality itself the domain that it enclosed, so that, here again, the existence of this domain, that is to say of the sensible world in the case in question, would immediately vanish.

One might moreover ask how such a complete and general atrophy of certain faculties could effectively have come about; for this, it was necessary that man be led to focus all his attention exclusively on sensible things, and it is from this that the work of deviation that one might call the "fabrication" of the modern world must necessarily have begun, and which, of course, could succeed only precisely at this phase of the cycle and by using, in a "diabolical" manner, the present conditions of the milieu itself. Whatever the case may be on this last point, one cannot sufficiently admire the solemn silliness of certain declamations dear to scientific popularizers, who delight in affirming at every opportunity that modern science constantly pushes back the limits of the known world, which is exactly the opposite of the truth: never have these limits been so narrow as they are in the conceptions admitted by this so-called profane science, and never had the world nor man been so diminished, to the point of being reduced to simple corporeal entities, deprived, by hypothesis, of the least communication with any other order of reality.

There is moreover still another aspect of the question, reciprocal and complementary to the one we have considered up to this point: man is not reduced, in all this, to the role of a simple spectator, who would have to content himself with forming a more or less true, or more or less false, idea of what takes place around him; he himself is one of the factors that intervene actively in the modifications of the world in which he lives; and we could add that he is even a particularly important factor therein, by reason of the "central" position that he happens to occupy in this world. Consequently, the materialist conception, once it has been formed and spread in some manner, can only contribute to reinforcing still further this "solidification" of the world that first rendered it possible, and all the consequences that derive from this conception tend

only toward this end.

We are not referring here only to the direct and all too evident results of industrial and mechanical activity, but also to the much more general reactions of the cosmic milieu itself in the presence of the attitude adopted by man toward it. One may truly say that certain aspects of reality conceal themselves from anyone who envisages it in a profane and materialist manner, and render themselves inaccessible to his observation; this is not merely a manner of speaking that is more or less "imagistic," as some might be tempted to believe, but rather the pure and simple expression of a fact, just as it is a fact that animals flee before someone who manifests a hostile attitude toward them; and this is why there are things that will never be able to be observed by materialist or positivist "scientists," which naturally confirms them still further in their belief in the validity of their conceptions, whereas this is nonetheless only an effect of these conceptions themselves.

This is, in a certain way, the "counterpart" of the limitation of the faculties of the human being to those that relate solely to the corporeal modality: by this limitation, he becomes, as we were saying, incapable of leaving the sensible world; by what is now in question, he moreover loses every occasion of noting a manifest intervention of suprasensible elements within the sensible world itself; and thus there is completed for him, as far as is possible, the "closure" of this world, within which it may seem that "ordinary life" henceforth has only to unfold without disturbance and without unforeseen accidents, in the manner of the movements of a perfectly regulated "mechanism"; does modern man, after having "mechanized" the world that surrounds him, not aim at "mechanizing" himself as best he can, in all the modes of activity that remain open to his narrowly limited nature?

Nevertheless, the "solidification" of the world, however far it may be pushed, can never be complete, and there are limits beyond which it cannot go, since, as we have said above, its extreme outcome would be incompatible with any real existence, even of the lowest degree; and even, as this "solidification" advances, it becomes only ever more

precarious, for the lowest reality is also the most unstable; the ever-increasing rapidity of changes in the present world moreover bears witness to this in an all too eloquent manner.

Nothing can prevent there from being “fissures” in this supposed “closed system,” which moreover has, by its “mechanical” character, something artificial that is scarcely of a nature to inspire confidence in its duration; and at the present moment itself, there are multiple indications that show precisely that its unstable equilibrium is on the point of being broken, so that what we were saying earlier about the materialism and the “mechanism” of the modern epoch could almost already be put in the past, even though its practical consequences might continue to develop for some time yet.

This is so true that, at the moment at which we are, the very notion of “matter” seems to be in the process of vanishing. Only, unfortunately, since the cyclical “descent” is not yet completed, the “fissures” in question can scarcely occur except from below; in other words, what “interferes” in this way with the sensible world is nothing other than inferior psychism, in what it has that is most destructive and most dissolving; hence it is not difficult to understand that everything that tends to favor and to extend these “interferences” corresponds, consciously or unconsciously, only to a new phase of the deviation of which materialism represented a less “advanced” stage, whatever the appearances may be.

The derisory security of “ordinary life” is indeed strongly threatened, and one will doubtless see more and more clearly that it was only an illusion; but is there really reason to rejoice in this, if it is only in order to fall into another illusion still worse than that one, that of a “spirituality in reverse,” of which the various “neo-spiritualist” movements that we have seen arise and develop up to now are still only very weak and mediocre precursors?

THE EXIT FROM THE CAVE

The final exit from the initiatic cave, considered as representing the "exit from the cosmos," seems, according to what we have said previously, to have to be effected normally through an opening situated in the vault, and at its very zenith; we recall that this upper door, which is sometimes traditionally designated as the "solar hub" and also as the "cosmic eye," corresponds, in the human being, to the Brahma-randhra and to the crown of the head. However, despite the references to solar symbolism that are encountered in such cases, one might say that this "axial" and "zenithal" position relates more directly, and doubtless also more primitively, to a polar symbolism: this point is that at which, according to certain "operative" rituals, the "plumb line of the Great Architect" is suspended, which marks the direction of the "Axis of the World," and it is then identified with the polar star itself[1].

It should also be remarked that, for the exit to be able to be effected in this way, it is necessary that a stone of the vault be removed at this very place; and this stone, by the very fact that it occupies the summit, has in the architectural structure a special and even unique character, for it is naturally a "keystone"; this observation is not without importance, although this is not the place to insist further upon it[2].

In fact, it seems rather rare that what we have just said is observed literally in initiatic rituals, although one may nonetheless find a few examples of it[3]; this rarity may moreover be explained, at least in part,

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1 We recall in this regard that, according to the Far-Eastern tradition, the polar star represents the seat of the "Great Unity" (Tai-yi); at the same time, if one must normally envisage the axis in a vertical position as we have just said, it also corresponds to the "Great Ridge" (Tai-ki), that is to say to the summit of the celestial vault or of the "roof of the world."

2 This relates more particularly to the symbolism of Royal Arch Masonry; we would also refer, on this subject, to the note found at the end of our article on The Tomb of Hermes (December 1936 issue, p. 473).

3 In the high degrees of Scottish Masonry, this is the case in the 13th degree, called that of the "Royal Arch," but which must not be confused, despite certain partial similarities, with what, in English Masonry, constitutes Arch Masonry as distinguished from Square Masonry; the "operative" origins of the Scottish degree in question are moreover much less clear; the 14th degree, or "Grand Scottish of the Sacred Vault," is likewise conferred "in an underground and vaulted place." It should be noted, in this regard, that in all these high degrees there are many data of diverse origins, which have not always been preserved integrally nor without confusion, so that, in their present state, their real nature is often rather difficult to determine exactly.

by certain difficulties of a practical order, and also by the need to avoid a confusion that risks arising in such cases[4]. Indeed, if the cave has no other exit than this one, it will have to serve for entry as well as for exit, which is not in conformity with its symbolism; logically, the entry should rather be found at a point opposite to that one along the axis, that is to say in the ground, at the very center of the cave, which one would reach by an underground path.

However, on the other hand, such a mode of entry would not be suitable for the "greater mysteries," for it properly corresponds only to the initial stage, which has then been passed for a long time already; one would therefore rather have to suppose that the recipient, having entered by this underground path to receive initiation into the "lesser mysteries," then remains in the cave until the moment of his "third birth," when he exits definitively through the upper opening: this is theoretically admissible, but is obviously not susceptible of being put into practice in an effective manner[5].

There exists in reality another solution, which involves considerations in which solar symbolism this time takes the preponderant place, although traces of polar symbolism remain there still quite clearly apparent; there is there, in sum, a sort of combination, and almost of fusion, between these two modalities, as we indicated at the end of our preceding article. What is essentially important to remark in this regard is the following: the vertical axis, insofar as it joins the two poles, is evidently a North–South axis; in the passage from polar symbolism to solar symbolism, this axis must in a certain way be projected onto the zodiacal plane, but in such a way as to preserve a certain correspondence, one might even say an equivalence as exact as possible, with the primitive polar axis[6].

4 T his confusion exists in fact in the Scottish degrees that we have just mentioned: the "underground vault" there being "without doors or windows," one can enter, as well as exit, only through the single opening made at the summit of the vault.

5 In a certain sense one may say that the "lesser mysteries" correspond to the earth (human state) and the "greater mysteries" to heaven (supra-individual states); hence also, in certain cases, a symbolic correspondence established with the geometric forms of the square and the circle (or those derived from them), which the Far-Eastern tradition, in particular, relates respectively to earth and to heaven; this distinction is found again, in the West, in that of Square Masonry and Arch Masonry that we mentioned earlier.

6 It is to this same passage from one symbolism to the other that there relates the "transfer" of certain constellations from the polar region to the zodiacal region to which we have alluded elsewhere (see The King

Now, in the annual cycle, the winter and summer solstices are the two points that correspond respectively to North and South in the spatial order, just as the spring and autumn equinoxes correspond to East and West; the axis that will fulfill the required condition is therefore that which joins the two solstitial points; and one may say that this solstitial axis will then play the role of a relatively vertical axis, which it indeed is in relation to the equinoctial axis[7]. The solstices are truly what one may call the poles of the year; and these poles of the temporal world, if it is permitted to express it thus, substitute themselves here, by virtue of a real and in no way arbitrary correspondence, for the poles of the spatial world; they are moreover naturally in direct relation with the course of the sun, whereas the poles in the proper and ordinary sense of the word are, on the contrary, entirely independent of it; and thus the two symbolic modalities of which we have spoken are linked one to the other as clearly as possible.

That being so, the "cosmic" cave may have two "zodiacal" doors, opposed along the axis that we have just envisaged, thus corresponding respectively to the two solstitial points, and of which one will serve as entry and the other as exit; in fact, the notion of these two "solstitial doors" is found explicitly in most traditions, and a considerable symbolic importance is generally attached to them. The door of entry is sometimes designated as the "door of men," these being able in this case to be initiates into the "lesser mysteries" just as well as simple profanes, since they have not yet passed beyond the human state; and the door of exit is then designated, by opposition, as the "door of the gods," that is to say that through which pass only the beings who have access to supra-individual states. It remains only to determine to which of the two solstices each of these two doors corresponds; but this question, in order to receive the developments that it involves, still deserves to be treated separately, and we shall examine it more particularly in a forthcoming article.

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of the World, pp. 115–116).

7 We do not have to concern ourselves here with the fact that, among the different traditional forms, there are some that give the year a solstitial point of departure and others an equinoctial point of departure; we shall say only that the predominance thus attributed to solstices or equinoxes again finds its reason in the consideration of different cyclical periods, to which these traditional forms must be related more particularly.

Further articles can be found in French on the following websites:

https://archive.org/details/RG-articles-gd

https://iapsop.com/archive/materials/etudes_traditionnelles/

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